

# CLOSE UP

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## AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

One of the points that is repeatedly being brought forward with all portentousness is the *precariousness* of the cinema. This giant industry, say the wise and the wiseacres, depends solely on public support. If the public tires of the cinema, as it is tiring of the theatre, as already it is tired of the radio, doom in large block capitals hangs over the entire cinema world. That is what they say. As if any industry of any kind were not wholly dependant on public support.

There will probably always be war about the cinema, because each generation will bring a new series of developments, and therefore each generation will possess a slightly different consciousness of the cinema from the one preceding. First of all, however, let us answer the pessimists.

What is it, let us probe, that is given as a reason for the public to grow tired ? Sometimes it is the "dead level of

mediocrity", sometimes it is the "mawkish sentimentality", sometimes it is the "fickle nature of man" sometimes the arrival of "a new craze which will supercede. . .etc." A more detachedly reasonable note is struck when you get onto the likelihood of financial failure, and one thing cutting another's throat, as well as cutting off its own nose to spite its face. Even so, before one branch could have withered, a new one would be there to take its place.

A deal level of mediocrity has never yet and probably never will disturb or alienate any public. When the public begins to tire of mediocrity, it wont be only films that will have to snap up. Much the same applies to mawkish sentimentality. What mawkish sentimentality there is in the cinema plays comes down to them, regrettably, from the mawkish sentimentality of the stage ; impinged upon them by those middleheads who confuse the relations of stage and screen. Time enough to worry about mawkish sentimentality in the cinema when you're free of it elsewhere. The fickle nature of man is not so fickle after all when it comes to national institutions such as the cinema. We have had the theatre with us for some considerable centuries, and it's not dead yet. Newspapers, which present life with far less accuracy than the films, are likely to remain popular. Motoring as a pleasure is hardly likely to die out until aeroplanes are made accessible to all, and even then will hold a certain ground. No, certain forms of pleasure or comfort or convenience come to stay. The cinema has more than the film in its favour. Miss Dorothy Richardson in her excellent series of articles in



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this journal has given us many of these points. Among them, the obvious appeal of three or more hours', warmth, music, comfort and company at a negligible price. I'm afraid I am not among those who deplore the extravagant vulgarity of the large movie theatre and its appurtenances. I approve of the elaborate lighting systems, the slick attendants, the vastly popular (when not despised) Wurlitzer organ, the four or five or six projectors, the trimmings and general paraphernalia. For these I hand it to the justly famous Roxy, who is, we hear, to build a replica of his New York "Cathedral" in New Oxford Street, in London. In these "Cathedrals" we have warmth, large comfortable plush armchairs, thick carpets, the most up-to-date ventilation, and whether you like them or whether you don't, pretty effects of lighting and decoration, a sense of festivity, of being part of life, and in the pulse of things, of not being lonely or cut off or friendless, and music either sufficiently well played by an orchestra or by the zephyr-suave insinuations of the Wurlitzer. Not that I care about these things, although I *do* care, simply because they are part and parcel of the principal interest of my life. Speaking personally, I prefer to see a film in the unpretentious silence of a common or garden projection-room, but I do not advocate this by any means as a general principle. Roxy is right when he builds his "largest in the world-s". People are going to come for the warmth and comfort and fun of it if for nothing else. Add to the attraction in every possible way, as a principle is sheer commonsense, although you'll find the precious and pretentious and the dull will devote

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most of their energy to repudiating it all, and so, as usual, bicker over a thing that has nothing to do with final issues, and is, in its own place, good sound business psychology.

The idea of "a new craze" to supercede the film need not be worried about in this or the next few hundred generations. Life isn't so prolific when it comes to finding out new ways of artistic expression. It has given us, from the beginning of time not more than six mediums. The change that may come about is the installation of private projectors, and the purchase of films (which will be printed, if present experiments prove satisfactory, on special paper) for the home library. Even that will not do away with the cinema, because of its "vulgar and tawdry" urbanities, which will remain popular.

The cinema has entered into modern consciousness, (and by modern consciousness I mean the consciousness of the present younger generation) and is part of that consciousness, and to take away the cinema would be to leave an unbalanced void in consciousness which could certainly not be filled by trying to form interest in the other arts or "vulgar entertainments". The cinema has become so much a habit of thought and word and deed as to make it impossible to visualise modern consciousness without it. It is so much part and parcel of development, so linked up consciously and subconsciously with growing up, with learning, with this, that and the other thing, that one no more thinks of there being no cinemas than one thinks of there being no museums or art galleries.

Looking back we can remember the beginnings, or, at any

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rate, the crude early stages. The "cathedrals" are still novelties. The whole film world (industry, trade, art, whatever you choose to call it) for us is exciting still with growth as wild as a March gale. What of the next generation, to whom super-films and super-cinemas will be established things, for whom the March gales will have died away? Ah, yes, (I can hear the question in chorus, as from the Old Crones in one of those dismal 1880 ish symbolic plays) what of the generation to come? After March, April. Some of our present impasses passed, some more cropping up. In the consciousness, very little difference. Children rarely go to the cinema until they begin to grow up, except in England. So their attitude to the cinema at say sixteen will be much what yours or mine was. The English children who go as habitués should develop a critical faculty, and be through with rubbishy stage psychology by the age of ten, and demanding something better, and something better too than films recklessly dubbed "suitable" for the young mind, such make-believe nonsense as *Peter Pan*, which I believe bores every child I have ever met, or *The Thief of Bagdad*; when so obviously the films suitable for children are those which will teach them something of the world going on around them, and what they can logically expect from it, instead of filling their heads with hocus-pocus and undermining their defences with what is sentimentality if you will. If I had my way I would show such films as *The Love Of Jeanne Ney* to any child, as being true to life in every detail. Others like *Bed and Sofa*, or *The Mother* or, *Joyless Street*, they might see and appreciate in early adoles



cence, these being purely sociological problems. The indiscriminate hurling of fairy tales and improbabilities and impossibilities at the child does nothing but engender that false and barren attitude to existence, so often met with, where everything concerned with actual existence, instead of being recognised at its true value, is called squalid or material or gross, and every natural beauty disqualified for trashy, unrealisable dreams. It will to a certain extent depend on what sort of films are shown to people during their childhood whether the cinema appeals to them as an artistic vehicle or as a mere side issue to their artistic development.

And it is this question of artistic possibility that the pessimists miss entirely. The cinema is more than a "whim", more than "peoples' entertainment". Without question it is the most forceful and dynamic means of artistic expression in existence, artistic in its best and ultimate sense. I do not mean by that precious or stylised or going off into fancy isms which generally belong to the swan-song stage of an art or art epoch, but straight-from-the-shoulder, vital slices of life. Again I qualify, not spectacular slices of life necessarily, but your life and my life. Competent direction can make the most trifling incident poignant, provided that incident is fundamentally true in itself and in its relation to the people whom it concerns. The review of *The Violinist Of Florence* elsewhere in this issue points out how the attempts of a girl to walk over the border into Italy form an absorbing and profound dramatic incident. Von Stroheim in his *Greed* was best in the scenes where action was economised down to its merest

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suggestion. The breath taking moments in *Jeanne Ney* were always the simplest ones. Yet minimised action has to be so true, so devilishly cleverly done, or it becomes as dismally *lourd* as friend Jannings in his *Way Of All Flesh*.

It would be a great pity for the effete or the tired out people to come along and mess up the course of the film with their tired out formulas, saying that this worn out thing and that worn out thing were the artistic forms to follow. My feeling is, and most will agree with me, the greatest hope for swift expansion is to keep films free from formulas as much as possible. Films need new blood utterly, as they have had and must go on having. The jaded, faded and disillusioned are no good and of no avail in this new world, and don't let us listen to their proselytising or theories, their premature attempts to sort out, apportion and stick on name tags, catalogue and standardise.

For the curious thing about the film is that its best and highest attainment is not for the few but for the many. Here is actually a great art for the multitude and for the few, appealing to both alike. But if this is to be so it is life that must be reproduced. The films for specialised audiences are not the greatest films, but the specialised films. A purely abstract film appeals to the man or woman whose mind operates in terms of abstraction, to whom abstraction takes on significance or special meaning. It may in its special sphere be perfect or otherwise, but unless I am very wrong, there is actually no such thing as the pure abstraction, for humanity at any rate, since the human mind is not abstract. It is doubt-

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ful if any two people will receive the same impression from any abstract film, simply because their reaction is personal instead of abstract. But, coming back to our point, there is abstraction enough for the most abstract mind in any film that is true to life and reproduces life, or suggests life. Pabst's cheap hotels, or the mere fact of his rain sodden landscape in *Jeanne Ney* are the nearest to pure abstraction that we have. Because somehow they are so true as to cease to be objective they become states of mind. The mind that sees in abstractions will see down endless vistas, layer on overlayer, and state of mind on state of mind.

The mind that deals in concrete values will sort out that which has special appeal for it, each individual mind will select what it finds in and takes from life itself. To each the film will have its different significance ; for those who probe deep, whole areas and hinterlands of suggestion, for those who do not probe at all its externals, its hero and heroine and its story. Thus there is no reason in the world why the best film made should not be in every way successful, and why it should not completely justify itself commercially. So there is no need to be dismal when reflecting that for some years to come the principal aim of all film companies will be to stabilise themselves financially.

Two more points that are always cropping up are these :

1. The film being "mere photographic reproduction" is not art.

2. A work of art has to be entirely individual.

Five minutes serious consideration is enough to prove that



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the former of these two objections is totally without foundation. The idea that art is necessarily an individual person's conception of a thing rather than the thing itself is obviously unsound. Individual conception is right enough when it is painting or sculpture or writing, for there you are dealing with matter in itself unproductive and inert—canvas, stone and paper. One mind only looking, say at a slab of marble, can visualise what it desires to do with it. The only hand that can reproduce the sculptured product as visualised is the hand operated by that one mind. With film negative you are not dealing with an inert thing. One turn of the handle and a series of complete pictures is made, no matter who turns that handle. Speaking personally I can honestly say that I never received the slightest pleasure from any thing in the way of art that was not purely photographic in form. Stylised and stunted methods interested me sometimes not for themselves, but because I am interested in psychology and people's attitudes to existence.

The objection that when you photograph a thing you are merely repeating mechanically what is already there bites off its own tail, for surely the function of art is to produce what is already there? It links on with the instance already given of false homage to unreality when more value is given say to a landscape in oils with smears and splodges for trees and clouds instead of reproducing as nearly as possible "what is already there." To prefer smears and splodges and deliberately paint them, no matter with what skill, betrays almost always—as I said before—a denial of the essential poetry and

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beauty of objective things, and a hankering after half worlds or dream worlds which any sufficiently scientific analysis would reveal to be inferior in every way to the world of fact. Doesn't it seem to you splendid that there is a means of depicting life—actually of depicting it—mechanically or any other way, of recording life, of watching life with an eye more clear, and a mind more clear, and an attitude of greater understanding? It seems splendid to me.

But for those who prefer art as a conception of a thing instead of a thing, there is still this answer, that people have to be grouped and moved and lights to be arranged and "sets" to be built, fantastic and stylised, if you will, as those in *Caligari*, camera angles (most important) to be chosen, meanings to be stressed, etc., etc., or again, if it is preferred, dozens of inventions for trick work, (mechanical, it is true, but no more so than a brush or a chisel if it comes to that) and plenty of scope for experiment in trick work to create any effect desired, down to (I say *down* to) sheer cubism or any other swan-songism.

The argument that a work of art has to be entirely individual simply does not hold in the movies. I expect it holds in literature and painting and sculpture and music. As I said, a slab of marble is a slab of marble, and is not representative of anything but a slab of marble. It will more or less be a slab of marble to every mind that looks at it except to the sculptor's mind, which will see it in terms of something carved. If he gets to work on it his chisel will do this and that, and everybody but himself will probably wonder why and what

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he is up to until the final touches. Then if it is any good at all they will recognise its application to life (to *life*, please notice) and praise or condemn it accordingly. Naturally they have had no say in the matter of its creation, because they could not know the intention of the sculptor's mind. The same principle holds in music, painting, poetry. It obviously cannot hold either in films or the theatre because you are not dealing with slabs of marble or sheets of canvas or reams of typing paper, but primarily with *people*, with living matter, with totally different planes and quantities and dimensions.

Things do not develop except according to and in harmony with their particular needs ; and to anyone who knows the first thing about cinematography, or to anyone who bothers to use his brain, it is quite clear that the creation of a film is not and cannot possibly be one man's job. It is the job of everybody concerned in it, from the director down to that elderly person who keeps all but the duly authorised away from the studio doors. The case *for* individual actuation in the films is met sufficiently by there being the dominating mind of the director, who, if you care to look at it that way, chisels his material as the sculptor does his, whose approval is the final word ; which amounts in the long run to exactly the same thing as writing a book, painting a picture or carving a statue. The only thing is that his material is not figments and personal conceptions, second hand, so to speak, but immediate contact with fact, with living forces.

The director depends on the cameraman, the cameraman



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depends on the electricians. So on and so on. But don't forget that the director is the director. He may depend on everybody concerned on his sets, but likewise they depend on him, and his prerogative is to scrap the lot if they do not meet his requirements. But when things run smoothly, (happy, rare occasions!) each and severally creates within his natural and obvious limits. The director's creation dominates, and is arduous and searing. The cameraman's is subtle, difficult, uncannily adaptable. The actor's exhausting, devoted...

So you can go on. The only place for individual work is in the cutting room. European directors, naturally, cut their own films. American directors don't. The process of cutting is very much akin to other arts, which can be achieved only by the individual. It is the only branch of cinematography that you can reasonably relate to the other arts.

Should the question arise why all the insistence on depicting life as life is, the answer is that hardly anybody sees life consciously, (note *consciously*) as life is, and that the advantage of having a means to show it to them is so profound, and at the same time obvious, as to need no apologia.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

## NOTE

By special request of many readers we are printing "stills" from *Potemkin*, in its effect perhaps one of the most significant pictures ever made. The story, if not the film, is familiar by now to most followers of the cinema, being an account of a revolution in Odessa in 1905, in which the revolutionaries were joined by the Russian navy.

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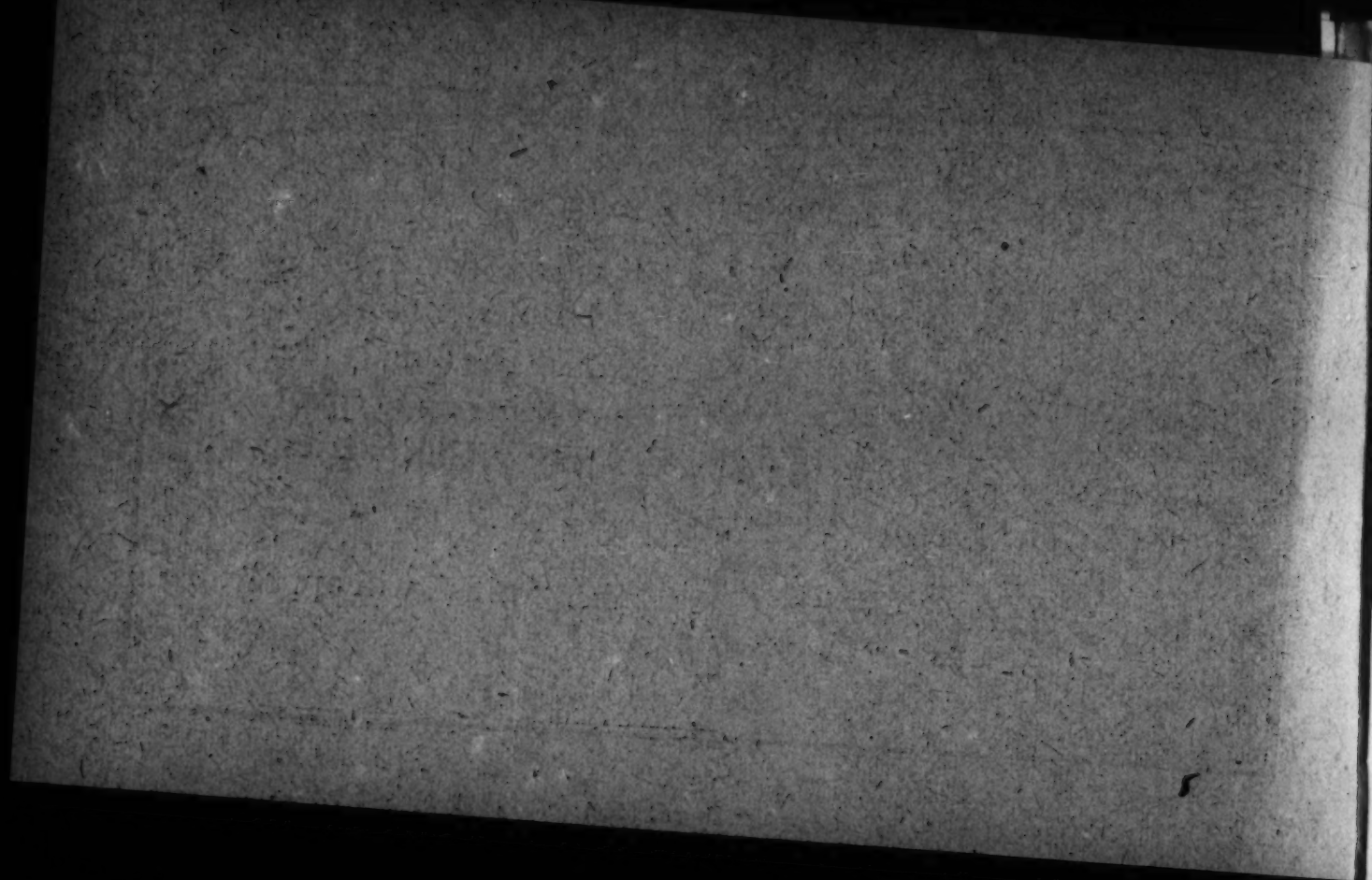
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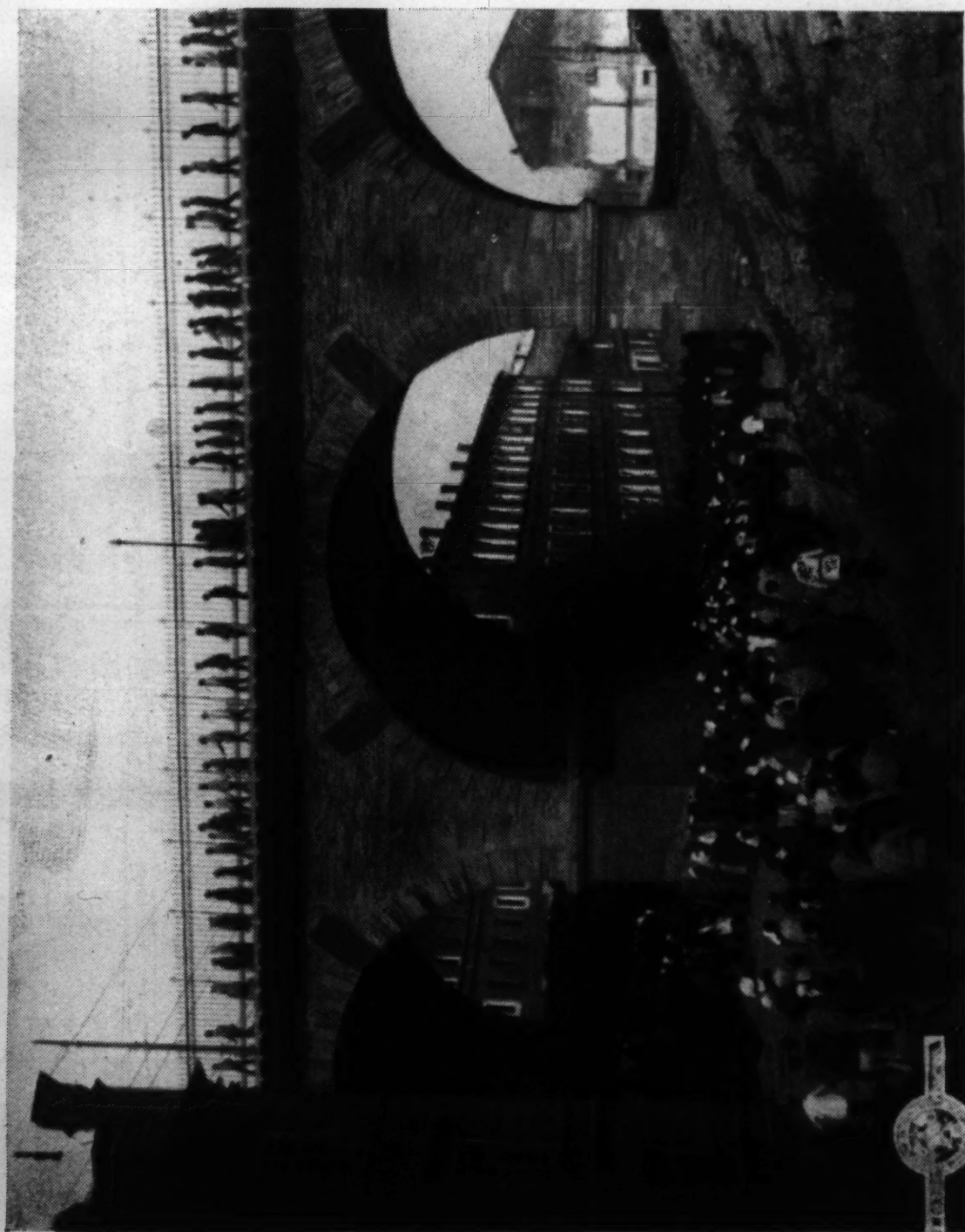


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The Odessa populace assembling before the revolution. The suggestiveness of the endless stream of hurrying figures converging below and passing across the bridge, speaks for itself. The weedy slope on the right broadens the conception very adroitly, as will easily be realised if a building is imagined in its stead.





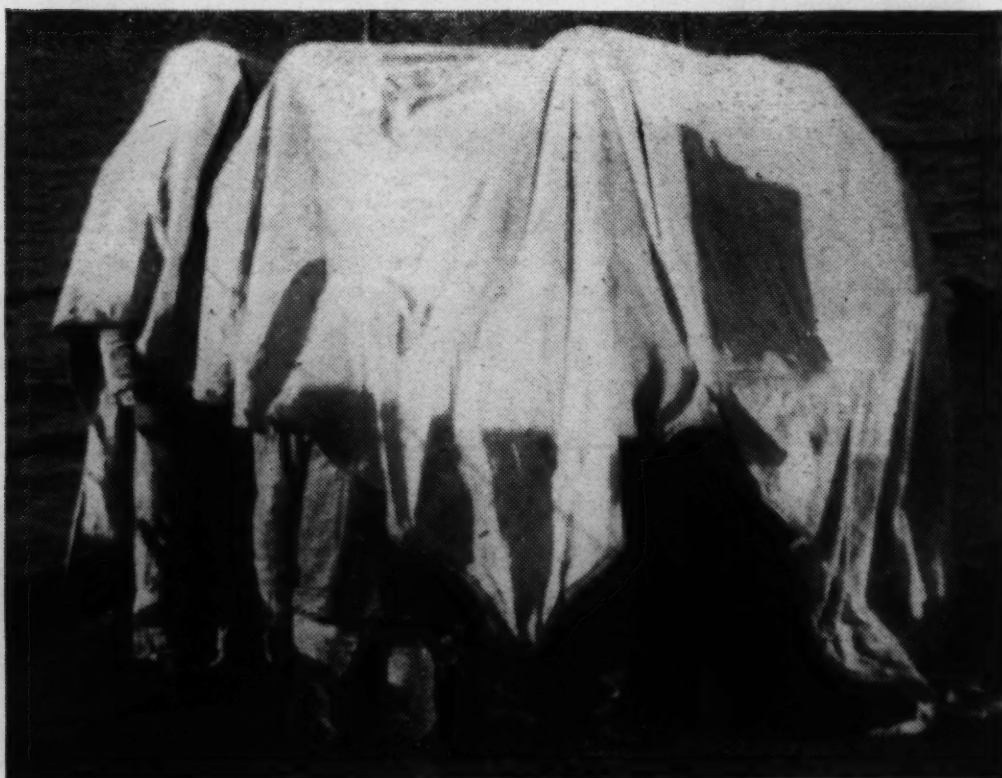
The massacre. A terrible and relentless scene, magnificently screened. The rhythmic descent of the Tzarist soldiers down a long broad flight of steps, firing a volley into the confused and terrified rebels at each step, remains one of the most vital incidents ever filmed.



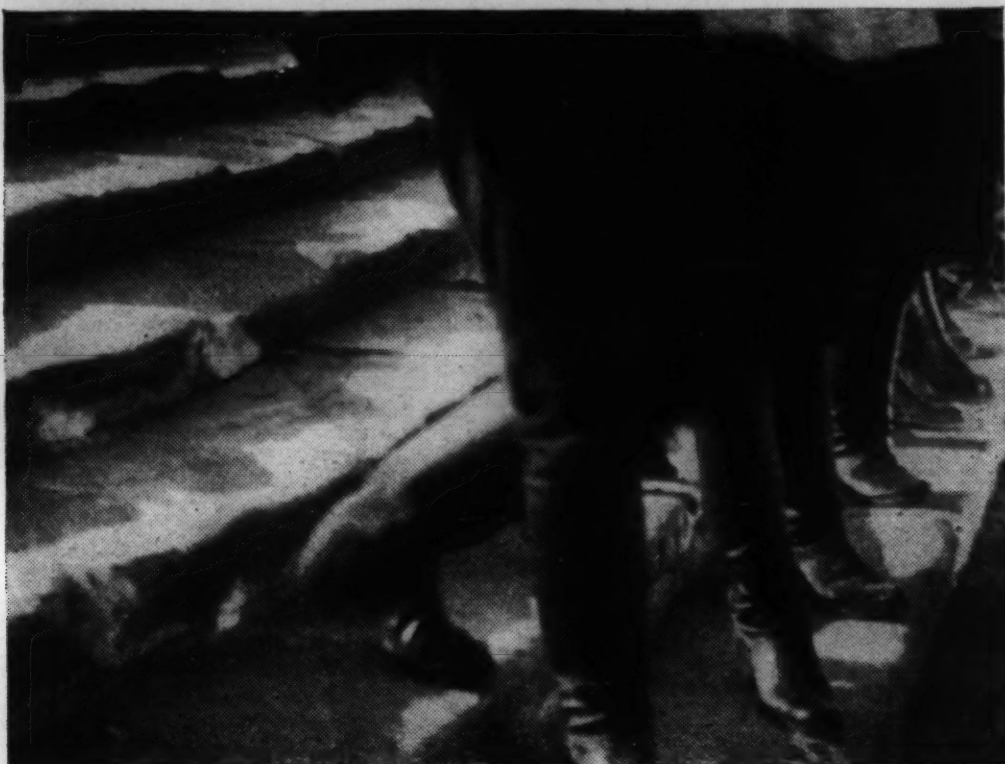
Late afternoon sun throws long shadows before the descending soldiers. Here a mother with the riddled and trampled body of her son advances screaming toward the soldiers, in a distraught effort to stop them shooting. She is instantly pierced by a dozen shots.



The beginning of the trouble. The meat on board the Cruiser Potemkin is shown to the commander, swarming with maggots : —a scene, incidentally, that has caused much spilling of ink among censors. Here the chief petty officer is ordering it to be made into soup, whereupon mutiny breaks out.



The captain's method of checking the mutiny. A dozen sailors are huddled under a tarpaulin and ordered to be shot ; some kneeling, others standing. At the last minute the shooting party refuses to shoot, and the crew turn on, and massacre the officers.



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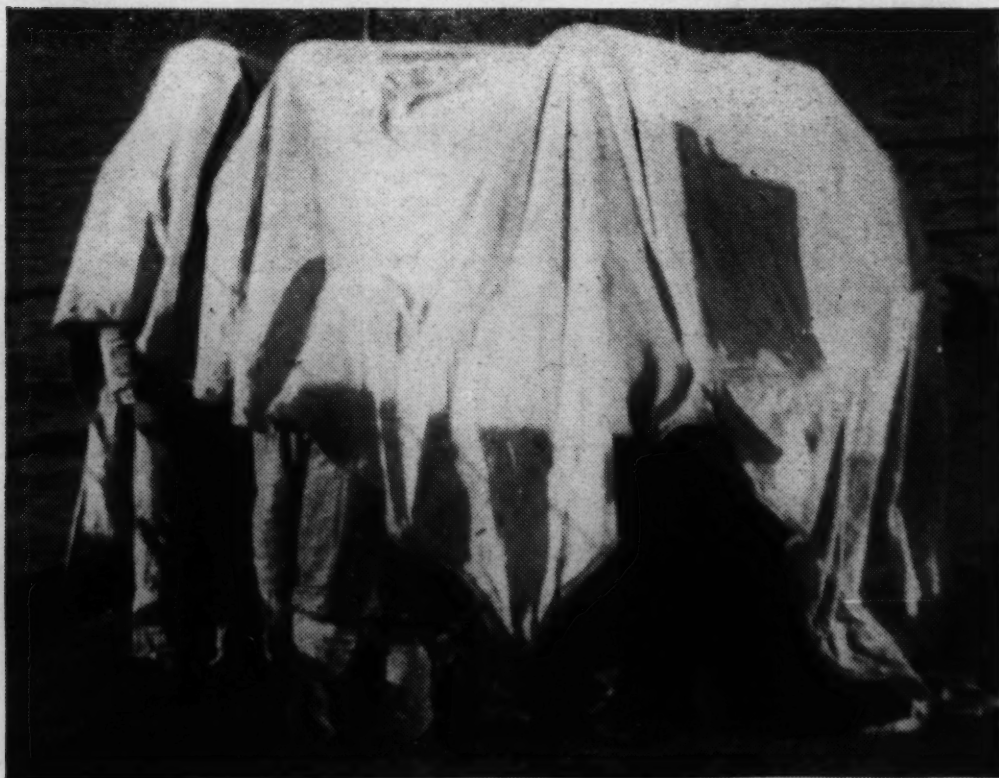


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From *Heimweh* (*Homesickness*), a Terra Film by Max Glass. How the sense of countryside and open space, and passing over of rain clouds has been captured in this scene speaks for itself. This is of Russia from the other side; that of the outcast Royalists. In this scene Mady Christians and Wilhelm Dieterle, returned to Russia after long absence.

*Photo: Terra Film A. G.*



Mady Christians in *Heimweh*. Her latest film, *The Youth Of Queen Louise*, also made for Terra Film (Max Glass Production) is directed by Carl Grune, whose outstanding films are *The Street* and *Am Rande Der Welt (The Edge Of The World)*.

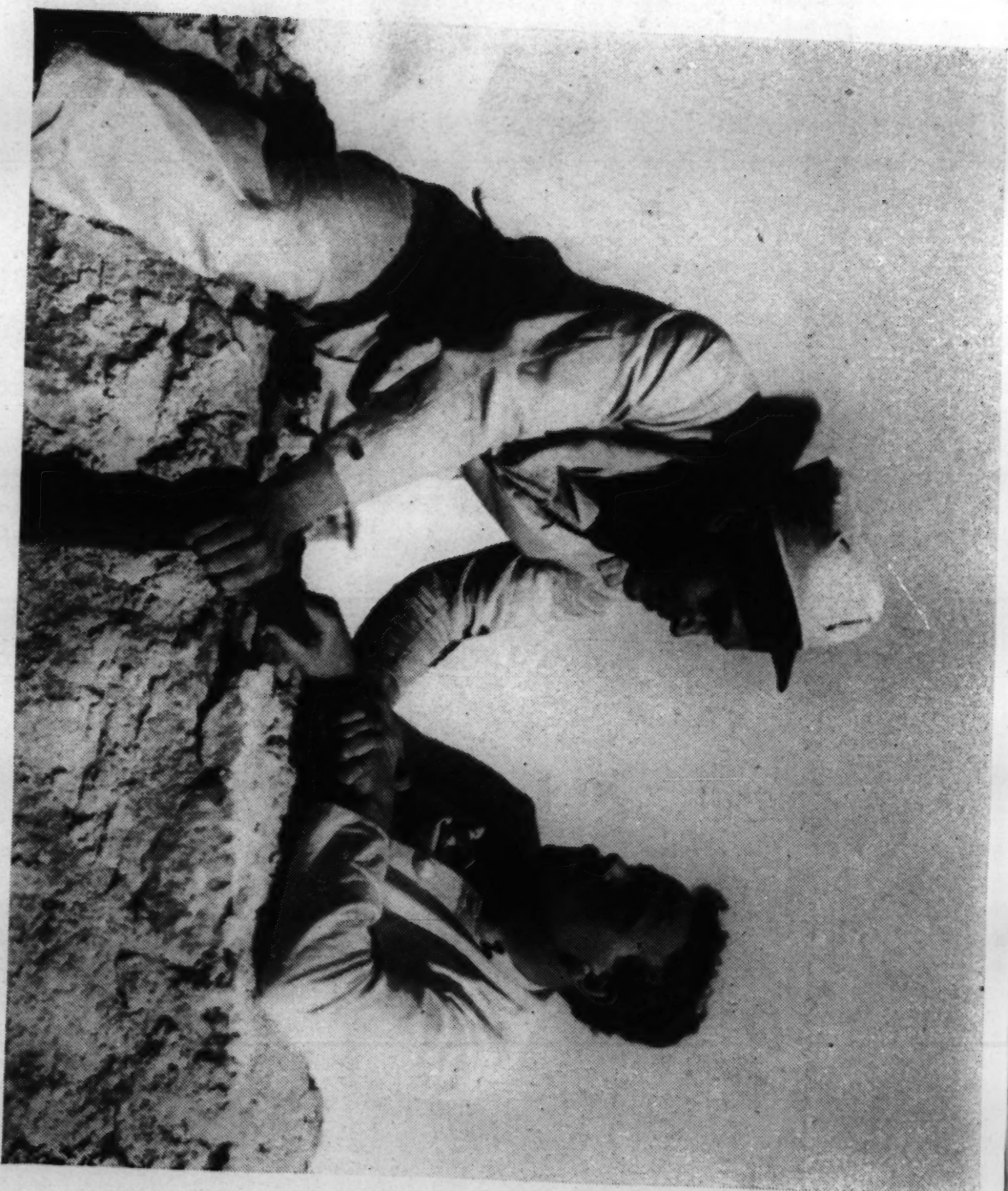
Photo : Terra Film A. G.



From *So Küsst Nur Eine Wienerin*, a light satire on Venice, made by Emelka. Here Erna Morena and Werner Fuetterer are still looking hopeful in spite of the Lido.

Photo : Emelka





Gustav Fröhlich, of *Metropolis* (though it may be forgotten in time) in the new Emelka film *Wenn die Schwalben Heimwärts ziehn*, another drama of the Foreign Legion, taken, for the most part, in Morocco. Bearing in mind the *Emden*, this film will probably present a different aspect from that of the somewhat high-pitched *Beau Geste*. With Fröhlich, Joop van Hulsen

Photo : Emelka



Gustav Fröhlich again. For further particulars of *Wenn die Schwalben Heimwärts zieh'n*, see the article by Fröhlich elsewhere in this issue. It looks as though the Fröhlich with whom we are familiar will be hard to recognise.



An effective long shot. Fröhlich is second right. The heavy clouds and bright sun give well an atmosphere of oppressiveness, while the line of advancing men is dramatic and tense.

Photos : Emelka



From the beautiful *Love of Jeanne Ney*. Edith Jehanne, as Jeanne Ney, before the Soviet Tribunal, following the death of her father.  
*Jeanne Ney* was made, of course, for Ufa by Pabst.



In the Montparnasse hotel. Jeanne Ney on the trail of the murderer  
 A superb film that you must try to see if you have not already done so.

Photos : UFA



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### VISION D'HISTOIRE

"Turning !"

A quiet, casual voice ; no excitement. The actors have not understood the situation. How could they when there has been no rehearsal ? Very well, take it again. But film is very expensive five pounds for hour hundred feet—to rehearse while the camera is turning. . .it is ridiculous ! However, it does not worry the little Frenchman with the "artistic" beard and merry eyes. Sometimes, they tell me, he becomes angry, but only in a civilised way.

"Turning," he says gently. Perhaps the actors do not hear the first time !

When the scene has been taken to his satisfaction he murmurs "bon". In England, if a director is not pleased with a 'take' a board is held up with 'N. G.' marked on it ; the shameful abbreviation for 'No good' which tells the laboratory hands that the scene need not be printed. Too many N. G's and the director may consider himself a failure, but here the successful scenes are marked 'Bon' and the others discarded. I hope it is not uncharitable to conclude that this casual but charming director must be used to having more 'N. G' s' than successes.

This gentleman, with the sublime indifference to 'footage', is Monsieur Léon Poirier, who is producing, *Verdun*, *Vision d'Histoire* for L'Alliance Cinématographique Européenne.

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I have not seen any of Poirier's films, but I believe he has been responsible for some exquisite fragments. His *Amours Exotiques* ran for many weeks at the Studio des Ursulines in Paris and is shortly to be shown over here. I am glad that I shall have an opportunity of judging his work apart from *Verdun*, for the latter was conceived in desperation. Why, oh why another war film? Because France had not yet contributed a war document and the worthy sons of France were indignant that America, Germany and even England should hold the monopoly of more or less 'big parades'. They demanded, not war films, but one war film to appease their patriotism and to show that they too could do it.

Yet the promoters of the enterprise must have been seized with a last minute panic for there was a scramble at the eleventh hour to drag in Germany and England. Most of the script was 'shot' in France, then the company went to the Ufa studio in Germany and finally came to England for a week. You see what I mean? Facts that need not be stressed in France but which help the foreign sales; the patriotic peasant is soothed and the usual aggressiveness of national propaganda mitigated for other countries.

Except for international diplomacy it hardly seemed worth while for Monsieur Poirier to come to London with his load of special yellow and blue carbons. (The film was entirely taken on panchromatic stock, and for interior work yellow and blue carbons were used in the ordinary lamps; the yellow for 'artificial' light and the blue for 'daylight'. Of course the camera man used a Debie). A short scene in an interrogation office,

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a shorter sequence in an estaminet set, a couple of street episodes, and some day and night shots in the trenches at Sandhurst ; all of them might have easily been taken in France or at Ufa. In fact the extras employed in several of the French scenes had to be Englishmen !

Those who have seen the sequences of *Verdun* taken abroad say that they contain some of the most realistic and effective reconstructions that have ever been introduced into a war film. This is quite likely, but I fear that everything in the film is sure to be tinged with that extraordinary French trait—undue stress on insignificant detail. That expresses what I want to say very badly, really it does not express it at all because the detail is never insignificant, only comparatively so ; but the way in which they waste all their energy on a detail and overlook or ignore the glaring solecisms is amusing or pathetic, I am not sure which.

Let me give you an example from the scenes taken at Sandhurst on a pouring wet day, a day on which I sympathized with Monsieur Préjean, crawling about with his face in the mud for hundreds of feet of film, more heartily than did with many heroes of more formidable exploits on the battlefield.

There was some gorse growing by the edge of the trenches. Naturally it must be removed. One little bit was forgotten. Assistants waved their hands ; everyone went on their knees ; there was difficulty in locating it ; while those who saw it insisted on bawling diffuse directions. Commotion and disorganization for several minutes. Then a piece of barbed wire. It



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must be moved a few inches to the left. . .no, to the right. . .now back again. . .so.

The trench was in the front line. I know it was in the front line because a British Tommy had just thrown an empty plum and apple tin over to the enemy's line with a cockney witticism on a dirty bit of paper stuffed inside. Yet (here is the point if you please) the principal actor did not wear a gas mask! Oh! yes, all the others did, and the gorse had been removed and the barbed wire set (just so) but the principal actor did not wear a gas mask! Poor man he was in danger of all sorts of dreadful penalties for such a serious breach of army discipline but he came through smiling conscious that his face was adequately registering on the screen.

That, I hold, is typical.

The humour was entrusted to Alf Goddard. No war film seems complete without him; *Remembrance*, *Carry On*..... But what is the use, obviously some one enjoys this sort of thing (" 'Ere missus four children. . . .three when I left. . . Naw, you don't, that's the milkman's". . . !!!).

Now photographically. France appears to have gone "pan" mad without understanding it. So much of it is self deception. Look at *Le Diable au Cœur*, the camera man brought it off once in twenty times; the rest was amazingly flat and dull.

The negative obtained with the yellow and blue carbons seems rather hard.

Finally the Debie. In spite of the intermittent movement in the gate incorporated in the latest models, somehow or

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other over here we don't trust it. Visions comes before us of dust in the velvet lips of the magazine boxes, and even the most devout Debie disciple would admit that the magazines are the weakest part of the machine. I hope *Verdun* is not all scratched. I am sure it won't be— but I feel certain that some of it will ; a point which I might have used to strengthen my argument about the queer French indifference to the real defects.

O. B.

(This is one point of view. There is also the other. I have used a Debie, Model L. Camera for many months, with increasing admiration. Many thousands of feet of negative have passed through it, and not once has there been the slightest suspicion of a scratch. Moreover it has not especially occurred to me that the velvet lips of the magazines were particular dust-catchers, and they have only received the merest suggestion of a brushing on the somewhat too rare occasions when I clean and overhaul. The Debie magazine has not caused the least trouble. I have tried several makes of camera, and would, from my experience, recommend the Debie always. [Ed.]

## THE KING OF KINGS AGAIN

\*We are glad to print this as a tribute to H. B. Warner and to Cecil M. de Mille, feeling that the puerile and somewhat vicious attacks certain critics have made upon a film that had passages of great beauty, have been due mainly to their instructions from someone or other. and not altogether necessarily from ill-breeding. (Ed.)

"We are creatures of pitiful tradition. "Is God Catholic or Protestant ?" I was once asked by an American-Italian

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child of the immigrant classes. Well, is he ? I am glad to think anyway that Cecil de Mille is at least in part of Jewish ancestry. But correct me in this. He may not be, I should like to think that the product of this exquisite non-partisan drama sprung from the same root-stock as that figure he portrayed so capably. The performance (as far as the central figure is concerned) of Cecil M. de Mille is consistently dignified. Sincerity, taste, courage, discrimination, are all brought to bear upon this personification which we from our earliest infancy have all half wittingly associated with "say your prayer before you go to sleep" or "you can't do that on Sunday." The Christ arises out of the present to destroy the near-past, to re-create the far past and to re-inspire the future.

Moreover this *King of Kings* is beautiful. I am astonished at the acumen of the producer, of the director. The actor himself is some genius of rare order, H. B. Warner, quiet, tense, intense. The drama centred about the central figure as it should do. I mean it is so obvious in almost any great renaissance masterpiece that the décor and the attendant multitude, mob of followers or intimate group of disciples is of more importance than the central figure. Invention wore itself out or some sort of devout inhibition held back the brush of the painter, as in so many Last Supper scenes (with the obvious exception of Leonardo's) or interiors of Marriage Feast or Pentecostal Ceremonies. Not with this most mechanically modern of creators. Cecil M. de Mille has toned down his surroundings, almost as if some outer force directed him



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in his ambition to conceive convincingly that central figure. Or was it simply that H. B. Warner held the centre of the screen by sheer force of sincerity, sensitiveness and vibrant magnetism ?

*I will, be thou clean. . . thy sins are forgiven thee. . . render unto Caesar. . . Father, forgive them. . .* these time honored phrases, mysteries like the Seven cryptic sayings on the walls of Delphi, take new meaning, new strength ; flung into the very maelstrom of present day fervour and activity, the words, the Delphic utterances of the young Hebraic-sungod remain true, hold power, intensity, meaning, reality. This is the gift of Cecil M. de Mille. *Spread the gospel* is more or less the fore-word of his drama. Regrettably or unregrettably the familiar "texts" were rendered in our Lake Geneva small-town, in French and German. The mind clicks to the inevitable translation and in that click records : the French has fluency, perhaps some exquisite quality of the original New Testament Greek, the German like the Elizabethan English, power, reality. The German is naturally nearer the German. . . . Lutheran sincerity growled so to speak, the drawback of great breakers, "I found my church upon a rock." The words, the French and German of the familiar texts hammered in, beat in that old truism *to all nations. . . I am the light of the world*, certainly for all eyes to see, mechanical invention perfecting the image of the young man introduced in the very act of healing a blind child. I must say no Eleusinian magic or trick of ancient priest craft could more honorably and with more divine subtlety have portrayed to the initiates its Earth

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mother or the mystery of Osiris. By drawing the Christian tale and poetic drama right into line with the most modern minute-after-next modernity Cecil M. de Mille has flung it back spiritually into its own setting. The young man Is a young man. He is no bearded and over-robed occult priestling no over-ornate somewhat sheep-like mystic, he Is. The Christ of the *King of Kings* fading out from the little room of the last farewell into the roll of motors, the irregular jag on jag of sky-scrappers, hulks of great boats lying at dry dock is true to utmost convention yet stands unconventionally apart a new reality to be grasped and gratefully re-instated. . . "behold I am with you always."

I believe that last tableau was deleted from the London production ; I know it was from the German. It seemed to hold the crux and final reason for the whole matter. Christ out of a gallery, Christ smelling of paint and with red scars also smelling of paint and with exquisite but too innocent forget-me-nots and briar roses springing from blameless feet was not "with us always." Nor the Christ of terrible Flemish outline, the figure that has roused in so many defenceless children the phobias that in later life paralyze will and being. Intellect and reason have tried to annihilate that gruesome figure, have sometimes in part succeeded, where pure mind fails, they charmed away prejudice and revulsion by stressing (I refer particularly to the last Passion) the beauty of harmony rather than the ghastly discord of subjection. Charm with integrity, beauty remaining through mutilation... there was harmony in that vision. CHARM is what the great

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teacher pleaded. Saint Paul's CHARITAS. And though I have all faith so that I remove mountains and have not CHARM, I am nothing. Charm held us. The figure as interpreted by H.B. Warner charmed and remained consistently exquisite. "You healed Mark's leg, mend my doll for me," says a little girl, one of a throng in a suffer little children scene that might have been pitiful bathos; the suave gesture of the young man, reaching out toward the little girl, taking her doll from her, made a lovely picture-card that went with that particular text, illuminating comment on the Victorian Sunday School elaborate tedious Sundays. The young master really did care (really does care) about that particular doll, about anybody's broken stuffed toy horse or camel. Well what can we do for you...for you...for you; his smile insisted, his glance met the intense gaze of two of his followers, older men, watching, watching...what is he up to now? He *will* have his little jokes.

His little joke was his own little joke, the hesitation, the final technical revelation, see I break off an edge of olive twig and this doll's joint fits like this and I fasten it here, here... that twirl of fingers...just as important to get this doll's leg in as to get Mark's lame knee straight. A little joke amplified by way of Warner or by way of de Mille or by way of one of the immense staff of caption writers, scenario writers or general staff critics. Perhaps that is what upset certain London scribes and Pharisees, simplicity, naturalness, the thing that made the thing...the rightness of that sensitive mouth explaining without spoiling for instance, his little plan to Peter.



## CLOSE UP

O don't annoy them. . .it isn't worth it. . .get these policemen, these Roman legionaries their little tribute money it's just as easy to pay taxes as not to pay them. . .but no money in the money pouch, says Judas. O well then. . .run along then.. he seems to admonish Peter. . .go along pull a fish out of the lake. All this pother about rates and taxes isn't worth our trouble, and he goes on carving. The suggestion of the subtle smile about the mouth endeared and illuminated, was lovable, endearing beyond words, that grace, that Hellenic charis. And though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge and have not a sense of humor, it secretly flashed at us, I am nothing.

We secretly seemed to be sharing some little joke with him, the whole time even up to the last perilous denouement. Jolt, jolt of that hideous thing along crowded ways, up, up the piteous ascent. . .the head bowed and the smile obliterated. . ."this won't do" and the young flaming Simon of Cyrene is smiling into the wan face. Simon of Cyrene got the joke too, suddenly. Funny, it's simply funny that such a thing should happen. He has straightened the insulted body, straightened it till it stands upright and faces him. Across centuries the same smile. . .it's funny really. . .*for they know not what they do. . .*

*To day thou shalt be with me in Paradise* Because you saw my little joke, saw that the whole thing was tunny. The other cursing and raving has no sense of humor. . .my mother there she has a shadow of an idea and John. The thief cursing there on the cross is a dull witted lout, he can't see the thing. . .

## CLOSE UP

takes himself seriously. The slow smile says this up almost to the last. . . then *why hast thou deserted me* ?

So much for the lyric, the poetic side of this Hebraic Sophoclean drama, so tactfully personified in H. B. Warner. There is obviously not so much to be said for the more lurid detail of surrounding classic pseudo-high life. I refer specifically to the Magdalene incident which in all fairness to all the anti de Mille critics, and anti film critics in general, is all too likely to do much harm, to prejudice the most open minded. This coloured projection of a somewhat unconvincing pseudo classic interior is almost a personification of all the things for which the ordinary critic blames the moving pictures and its adherents. Why must a supposedly fascinating woman (putting aside for the moment additional "religious" association) for example find it necessary to stress and over stress and re-stress all the vamp qualities of the most illiterate penny dreadful charmer ? *Must* Beauty always dress itself in scarlet, drag sumptuous velours about apparently naked limbs, disclose apparent nakedness unchastely half-revealed through apparent black chiffon ? Did Mary Magdalene, COULD she possibly ever have worn tights. . . and so on and so on, until no one could blame the somehow luke-warm would-be open minded convert to film art from leaving the pictures with a nauseated determination never at any price to be lured back. This Mary Magdalene is a blot on the whole production. . . we are sorry for her, for ourselves, for Cecil M. de Mille, for the chief lover of the moment (he happens to be Judas) and the crowd of Wall Street Jews, her adherents, who mouth

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and simper under flaxen paper-rose crowned wigs or who lift heavy stage ornament with obvious gesture. We were not even spared the inevitable vamp tigress, panther, some leopard-like beast whom Madgalene strokes with chic abandon. Mary Magdalene is chic. . .she is smart. . .she is a chorus girl who has it is most obvious, got on, she is the worst that can be said for Elinor Glyn and the best that can be said (by many) for the movies. Oh that is what You consider fine art ?

Well, de Mille remains in spots Cecil M. de Mille, the thing we felt and inevitably recorded, gargantuan personification, Mauvais Gout capitalized, Minotaur of Films, the thing we used to feel when we said Cecil M. de Mille. We have modified all that. And perhaps his very human quality and very obvious Big Idea somehow or other helped in the finer instance. He failed with Magdalene. His John, was a nimcompoop, his Judas a ham actor. His devil savoured slightly of Faust and had one rather distinguished gesture. . .but again the scene of would-be glory that he pointed to, the temptation was anything but tempting. Paper soldiers, rows of papier-maché chariots, a square blocked in, out of some technical work on classic street architecture, the columns all straight and made of paper cardboard, no Christ would be so tempted. Behold the powers of the earth was even better symbolized in an inferior almost negligible Italian film I saw recently, *Christus*, where the devil offers simply a crown, reaching a bare arm from some subterranean cavern. A crown presented from a cave depth. . .symbolism. . .something that might mean something else. . .there was nothing in the de Mille picture of



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Christ and the Devil that excused its introduction at just that exquisite moment. . .the Master has just overturned the money tables. He appeared miraculously young and strong and dynamic, those grey eyes lit with dynamic fire and wrath ; none of the "turn the other cheek" mystic about the dramatic and beautiful bit of acting. Warner supreme maintained the idea of the god in the man and the man in the god, at-one for perhaps the last time, dynamic fury so soon spent. . .and nothingness. The figure like a flower broken by white lightning that confronts Pilate.

Christ before Pilate was again a sustained and luminous piece of acting and of screen craft. The Roman is all a Roman, heavy yet intelligent, open minded yet conservative, handsome yet limited. The limitless meets the limited, the force of spirit meets the force of earth, earth power at its best Roman law, justice personified in this Pilate, so graciously portrayed by Victor Varconi. There is the familiar stage set, the step leading toward the impressive Roman throne, the heavy wings of the imperial eagle forming great wing background for the sturdy somewhat thick set richly robed ambassador of Cæsar. Render unto Cæsar indeed. . .the young Master standing inviolate and proud renders. . .silence, just tribute. "Do you realize ? I, I have power to crucify you ?" "You have no power." Christ answers, and Pilate, disillusioned weary intellectual, knows perfectly how true this is, Pilate no brute, justice, incarnate classic, knows he has no atom of chance against the supernatural. Nevertheless his job is his job. "I come to witness the truth" says the young

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Jew, justice is on both sides, it is stale mate. Pilate facing Christ is Rome facing Jew or Rome facing Greece, anyhow power of autocratic world leadership contrasted with the incarnate spirit of dispersed subjugated nations. The god is secure but being a god and alone, utterly bereft of followers, friends, associates, he has no chance against united, massed materialism. He already knows his fate, it is not Pilate but someone, something else that moves the pieces. Pilate's wife interceding is again a fine piece of acting and sustainedly Roman. The young teacher is removed to be flagellated off. . . stripes such as are administered to any common stirrer up of civic discord, obviously he is that. While Pilate dourly ponders his late epigram.

What indeed is truth ? Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge and have not. . . charm, I am nothing. Again de Mille stresses the magnetic power of the young Jew. The captain of the Roman body-guard is stricken, this presence, beaten like any flower branch in a black storm, the hands pinioned and the symbolic reed placed upright. The Roman is not brute, de Mille seems to say as the broad minded say to-day with a little stiffening of muscles and stark branching of shoulders, "the Germans were not altogether to blame." De Mille [says much for Pilate, much for the Roman host, something for the throng and crowd who simply don't know what the whole thing is they shout for. Crucify him they say ignorantly, as more lately "we want war." Crucify them, crucify him. . . forgive them for certainly they know not what they do. De Mille's whole propaganda is explicit.

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See both sides, see all sides, he even has his last humane gesture toward the evil and rapacious high priest ; Caphais before the shredded veil of the temple cried out "let not my people suffer for the crime of my own brutality." Father forgive them. . .it were indeed better for Sodom and Gomorrah in that day. . .for they know not what they do.

That seems to be the whole explicit meaning of this modern portrayal of the Master. Vulgarly itself is so easily forgotten, well perhaps the Magdalene incident at the opening is good for drawing the crowd, even perhaps de Mille believed sincerely in it. Magdalene driving zebras fades out, there is no chromo bright color, just this light and interweaving light and the eternal truism, the Delphic utterance, the voice in the silence, the oracle on the hill top, all the machinery of the mystics brought into everyday existence. The city set on a hill, the light on a candlestick, the two sparrows for a farthing, the render unto Cæsar are explicitly stressed and emphasized. Vulgarly of the boy Mark with his "overdone Jackie Coogan appeal" (I purloin the excellent phrase, from Mr. Robert Herring) the somewhat lax and devitalized mother, the inane John, the beetle browed and unconvincing Peter, so swiftly fade out. . .nothing matters but the smile that so supremely matters. Why is it that that sensitive smile so touched us ? Warner brought the most uncanny spirituality into the graceful figure. His very robes seemed patterned to robust lean Hellenic limbs, the frame so sparse yet so upright, so stern yet so tender, so unassailable yet so approachable. The Christ of Warner is a miracle of synchronization. Hellas



of the Renaissance. The outline remains Jewish according to conventional Christian pattern, yet the figure retains some heightened sense of physical perfection, some convincing psycho-physical emanation ; *such* a man could have done such things.

H. D.

## RANDOM REMARKS ON TIME AND SMOKE TANKS

You have heard the whispered legends of the chocolate coloured guards who encircle his villa, of the cabalistic dwarf (the royal jester) who is ever standing at his elbow, and of many other things as strange and luxurious. You would think that such a king had but to state his wishes to set in motion an intricate machinery of assistants which would seize and assimilate his desires, and quickly fashion them into deeds and things.

But no one in his vast retinue of satellites could give Rex Ingram what he wanted, and what he wanted was a beam of light. A simple, single visible beam.

The serried camera staff, lined before the irate monarch could only chant in unison : "Silver Dust ", but the stage

## *CLOSE UP*

hands had already, shaken out a miniature storm of silver particles which slithered over the glassy transparency to sink on the ground useless and ineffective.

Here I must pause to say that I give no credence to the rumour which tells how an English cameraman, who chanced to be present, lost his reason ; although I know that Stolls and other British studios have sometimes to close for months when the foggy atmosphere turns all the 'spots' and 'arcs' into sharply defined beams. Neither do I believe that any one suggested that the company should come to England to take the scene !

Perhaps it was the dwarf who finally thought of painting the beam on glass, and no doubt if it was the dwarf he was fittingly rewarded. For that was a solution, but why did no one think of a smoke tank ?

The smoke tank can give as many beams in as many places as the camera man desires, besides being capable of many other trick effects either beautiful or grotesque. The amateur in search of new fields of experiment may be pleased to make the acquaintance of the smoke tank ; at least I hope so, for I have introduced it at some length in order that he may be conscious of its practical, as well as its experimental, value.

Do not think that I offer him the smoke tank contumeously. Have I not said that the camera-men of Rex Ingram would have bartered their credit-titles to have remembered it ?

A spot light shining behind a small glass tank filled with smoke throws a reflection of the smoke on to a sheet of glass placed in front of the camera. Now, you want a beam of

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light coming from a window in your set. Place a 'sun' behind the window (actintically necessary) and cover your tank with a piece of black paper. Then cut out from the black paper a tapering column to correspond with the beam that you require in the set, and if you have done this successfully the beam thrown on the glass in front of the camera will coincide (when you look through the glass from the camera's angle) with the window in your scene.

Once more. The beam is not thrown actually on the set but on a glass sheet in front of the camera ; neither is it painted on the glass but reflected from a tank, illuminated by a spot light, which is masked by black paper so that the beam can be of any shape or size, or in any place, as your set demands.

Naturally it requires time, and a certain amount of collaboration from the director who must play his action—as they say in the studios—so that the characters do not remain in the beam for any length of time. They may pass through it but any dispensable dalliance will cruelly reveal the artificial.

Two adequate reasons why the smoke tank is discouraged in the British studios.

"Cameras here," yells the British director. "Lights, lights, what am I waiting for, how much longer ?..."

Camera men in England have no time, even if they desire, to experiment with effects, it would be too dangerous as retakes mean failure from the British director's point of view. Time, time. . . a perpetual rush and turmoil that would spoil the artistic qualities of a scenario by Kyser. "Take," say the studio committee, "and if it is not good enough we will take it



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again." But it is always good enough as money means so much more than the reputation of the firm, director and camera man.

Abroad they take a scene and retake it till everybody is satisfied that the best has been got out of it. I am sorry to have to come back to Rex Ingram, but do you remember the scene in "Mare Nostrum" where the hand of Death wipes out the name of a ship which is written across the wall of life? Ingram spent days on that scene and, in all, it was taken one hundred and eighty five times!

However, amateurs are not hampered with any question of time, and I commend the smoke tank to their notice, but if they want to study the effect on the screen first I do not advise them to select a quota picture in the hope of enlightenment.

OWSELL BLAKESTON.

## WHAT NEXT, AND THEN ?

A Latin play, or a little reshuffled Seneca are fit occupation for a gentleman and a scholar, said the early Elizabethans, but as for plays to be acted in tavern yards,—leave them to bricklayers and hold-your-horse-sir boys. How can anything be

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fine or worthy, said the grave clerks, that has to please the popular? So then : and to-day :—‘Seriously, now,’ our friends put it to us, ‘what hope for the cinema when films have to be made with an eye to the factory girl and the coolie?’

The theoretic position, that the cinema cannot be an art because it has to cater for nincompoops, is, of course, absurd. As it has been pointed out, Van Goghs and Christmas-card designers exist side by side. But the practical difficulties of producing a good film which is also commercially sound are interesting, and worth a good deal of study.

The intelligentsia of the studios seem to the less clever to be clutching at straws : it is as if they based their apologia for films on some glimpses of absolute pattern, or on some chance fragments of expressionism. It is of first rate and exciting importance to the film artist to watch the rapid development of the medium. Apart from minor changes painters and writers inherit arts which have already, somewhere or other, been fully exploited. These new tricks *are* important, but it is more important for us to recognise our public : we shall never do anything if we leave the public to the mercy of the illiterate, while we browse off the rare blossoms of the specialist’s closet.

What we must do, of course, is to use *them*, the common public, as cooperators, not forgetting that however clever we may be, *they* must be pleased. Later, perhaps, things may be different : the ‘improved’ public is almost with us now, and soon there will be films made for this public, just as there is one sort of play for the West End, and another for the local

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hippodrome, and yet another for the little art theatres. Probably, for reasons inherent in the medium and economics of the screen, there will never be the same gulf fixed between the categories of films. The majority will always be equally suitable for the people's palaces and the more expensive houses. A few weeks after one class has paid anything up to 8/6 to see *The Student of Prague*, another is paying anything down to 9d for, and this is important, the identical film. And this is all to the good : plays manufactured for a special class are only too apt to be dull. And again, plays written down often fail to please those whose mentality is prejudged. Strangely enough in this art if we try and please everybody, including ourselves, we *shall* please everybody, while if we have it on our minds to please a section—high-brow or low—we shall please nobody. We must insist that Shakespeare wrote for a public duller and more brutish than any to be found in a modern city. That the modern cit does not spontaneously prefer Shakespeare to musical comedy is no true test : for in these days it needs a certain amount of education and adaptability to suck from Shakespeare the emotions and pleasures we desire. The Elizabethan porter, for his part, would have been bewildered by the simplest film, because it is not at once easy to jump to the conventions.

Very well then, we must please the public, both because we need their money, and because it is our artistic safeguard. What do they *want* ? Sex and thrills, probably, in the good old style of *Cymbeline* and *Romeo* ; not to mention *Hamlet*, bristling with all sorts of stock hair-raisers.



## CLOSE UP

"I like love tales because they give me a funny feeling..." writes a pupil at an Evening Institute in a poor district.

And again :

The sort of book I like is a love book. . .it is since I left school that I have took a liking to them, and now I could not live without them. 'Peg's Paper' is my favourite. One day I was reading my novel, and when I got up to page ten it was torn in half, and it upset me very much, I could not get over it. It was called, 'The Wife Who Could Not Stop at Home.'

And again :

The book I really like is a love story. They are most fascinating, I don't mean a book that is a ridiculous love story. (Take heed producer !) For instance Ethel M. Dell, she is a writer that don't far fetch a thing. She puts a story so that you can read it without misunderstanding it. There are so many men's books which consist of mystery, as Edger Wallace. He is very clever, but I can't really follow his books.

I prefer a long dramatic tale of many romances. Some books have no plot in them, and then they are, as some people express it, as dry.

And here are two documents which, with the first quoted remind us that art is as necessary to civilised man as food.

## CLOSE UP

I can sit for hours reading the book (a cheap magazine) and I am very sorry when I have read it.

The love book is my best, that when I read this book, it fills me full of love.

And this is the class we must cater for ! But before we hold up our hands in horror and disgust, let us think what sort of film already produced would satisfy this section of the public, whose desires are so naïvely expressed, for these flock in their millions and make it possible for the studios to exist.

Would *Warning Shadows* satisfy ? One imagines that as a popular film it is before its time. "There are so many men's books which consist of mystery, as Edger Wallace. He is very clever, but I can't really follow his books." No, it must be some time before the mind of the public will leap to understanding such a play in the brief moments for enlightenment which the screen affords. *The Student of Prague* is better : unathletic minds heed not pant to keep up : but it is not a film for every week : mostly we want common life and people like ourselves.

In a naïvely illiterate but suggestive little book "The Mind and the Film," by G. F. Buckle (Routledge 5/-) a problem which occurs in all the arts, but is especially important in the cinema, is aptly put.

Attention to the average reflex alone will not suffice. If we ignore this (problem ?) altogether, the result will be that to the quick witted (people with short re-

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flex) the story will lag, and to the slow minded (long reflex) it will be bewildering.

Personally I think that the way to avoid this is not by slowing down, but by repeating the important points from many different angles : almost all films lag through the infertility of the producer's imagination : almost always each scene should have been broken down into smaller coal, which would have flamed more immediately and more brightly. But this is a subject for another paper.

To continue : after a little education (the best and natural education rising from a desire to learn) films even more strange in method than *Warning Shadows* will be readily gripped. Whether the sort of subject will ever be popular is a different matter.

Now take the film *Love Life and Laughter*, produced by George Pearson and Betty Balfour. Anyone can understand it immediately : it 'fills me full of love' it is not a 'rediculous love story' and moreover, it is a delicate piece of workmanship logically constructed, without waste, and strongly built on the broad emotions of humanity : and, although it was produced so long ago, and the photography is no longer up-to-date, it is a film of which no serious artist could be ashamed.

By the bye, why in all our chatter about films and film artists, do we neglect George Pearson and Betty Balfour ?

To see one film produced by these two is not enough. For some of them are rapidly put together and full of minor defects : through haste and lack of time and money. *Love Life*



## CLOSE UP

*and Laughter* has never been repeated. But after seeing half a dozen it is impossible to doubt that here, in spite of much that is poor, is that blend of realism and fancy on which alone good art can be reared.

Yet never are these two English artists (who are really *one* artist) ever mentioned by serious critics. Perhaps because they *are* English, but more probably because the films produced by them shew little appreciation of the pure medium : as if any English artist was ever able to keep to the lines, Shakespeare, Sterne, Gainsborough, or anybody else. They all tried to do ten things at once, and wrote poems when they thought they were painting pictures, and (Shakespeare above all) were positively slovenly and uneconomic and perverse in their use of the material. We are like this, and we can't help it, but when the result pleases we wonder what the academic are cackling about.

Not long ago a film of the *Squibbs* series was reported to be on at a small cinema in a slum district. It was a rare chance, and we went at once.

We were not disappointed : the film was English, with the proper tang ; the tang of Fielding or Sterne. But it is not its merits, but its reception that is important. The previous film which we had to endure was a lively melodrama : seductions, faked marriages, bedroom scenes, desperate villains, private yachts, burning houses—every sort of salt thrill imaginable. Now for this we clap, and even, when the fire-brigade dashes up, we raise a cheer. But we clap ten times louder, and stamp our feet and cheer ten times more vigorously for

Squibbs, at each moment of her gay career. There was no comparison : the better film although it provided not 50 % of the thrills and pormography was clearly the most acceptable, what everyone had come to see.

Statistics derived from another set of papers written by the same class as those quoted above will give us another point. The theme was "Where I hope to be in five years time." In 6 % of the papers the desired thing was congenial work : in 7 % wealth ; in 12 % a stage or screen career, in 20 % marriage : in 55 %, which included the best written and most vivid papers, a desire was expressed for travel, or some change that would bring them into the country. In these papers the words 'farm', 'garden', 'travel', 'Australia' occurred over and over again. Perhaps in 60 % of the 55 % 'farm' was mentioned specifically.

These figures, of course, are not built on any broad basis, but one feels more research would bear them out. If it is granted that we tend to desire in art what we miss in our lives we see that among these poor town girls wealth is only in the thoughts of 7 %, and the country in the thoughts of 55 %. We know that producers are right (commercially) in providing films of high life, dress clothes and champagne, but don't they overdo it ? Isn't there an unrealised demand for films of country life ? In America it may be different, wealth may be desired acutely by everyone, but in England, and, one would imagine in industrial Europe generally, there are things more important than wealth to the urban population.

It has long ago been pointed out that Shakespeare's plays

## CLOSE UP

(and most plays of the first importance) appeal to a dozen different levels of intellect : the philosopher never feels that he has come to the end of all the implications, the groundling never feels that they are above him. The young man finds that the plays develop and expand, as he develops, keeping pace. Each reads in them, as in nature, as much as he wants.

Now this is exactly what films must and can do : this is the aim that the supreme film artist must bear in mind. Leave the scientifically minded specialist to develop the medium-useful and essential though that work is, there is already enough to begin on. Begin then, and if you are English, begin in England with the material available, even though it is a degree behind the times. In due course you will be able to add to your range the new experiments from abroad : at the moment the world, and particularly England, wants sound plays, decently photographed, logically constructed and true to life, they must not 'far fetch a thing', and they must be built both broad and deep, capable of pleasing both the philosopher, and the factory hand. And it is all so possible. Last year in *Hindle Wakes* it was done at least once : but we want it done fifty times a year, or a hundred.

Then one day we shall suddenly discover that our public of Hodge and Typist are demanding the best that the cinema can produce.

The Shakespearian public was small, and as soon as it grew intelligent it was worsted by its neighbours, the Puritans. Only the plays for the debased rich survived the tussle. The



Puritan yoke has, for the common people, only been thrown off in the memory of living men. The first step was the popular novel—Dickens. The next might have been a new stage, the stage of the repertory theatre, but for some reason or other the theatre did not take its chance, it had been too long discredited, and out of touch with life; instead, the masses granted their allegiance to the cinema. A large audience brings a great artist: Shakespeare rose on the swell of one popular wave, Dickens on the next, and soon there will be another chance for someone as great, someone already born.

ROGER BURFORD.

## DEFENCE OF HOLLYWOOD

It grows increasingly tiresome to read in English newspapers tirades against the falseness and sham psychology of *all* American films. Fundamentally it is true of many—but then it applies equally to most of the British films shown to date—and yet how far it is from universal application.

The fact is that not one person in a thousand cinema goers in England understands American psychology or American values. Because an event may be impossible in Devonshire it does not follow that it is impossible in Arizona.

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American "comics" or American lighter comedies are true in their settings to American life ; they often fail when the historic, the serious or the tragic are attempted. And there is a curious cleavage in their films : the settings, the crowds, the minor characters will emerge with a startling reality but the hero and heroine are obliged to follow a preconceived "story psychology" that has little or no link with actual life.

The same phenomena may be noted in the American magazines or commercial short stories. The standards of mediocrity are far higher there than in Europe : the commercial distributor will not tolerate looseness of style or muddled thinking. So that whereas a writer will find himself unable to read (even in a railway carriage) what passes for magazine fiction in England he can read and even to a point admire, the similiar product in the States. Only sooner or later, writer and cinema goer, come up against the blank wall of "story psychology" ; a code that, far less than anything in real life, may be broken or ignored.

It is too much to ask of the average cinema audience that they appreciate differences between nations but one can ask a critic to understand something of national psychology before he sweepingly condemns film after film. America supplies most in quantity if not in quality and had it not been for the commercial encouragement found in the States during the past ten years, cinematography might still be in a very backward condition. We are certainly agreed that American domination of a European market is to be steadily resisted but chaotic criticism of the kind scattered over newspapers

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and weeklies lately will only promote bad feeling and achieve (on this side) no constructive end.

There is not, (we are told so often) any American producer except Chaplin with an artistic conscience or a creative gift. This is to be doubted. There was *White Gold*. (Directed by William K. Howard.) This was not perfect but it could be seen after many German films and still hold its own. The psychology was right ; the grit of sandstorm and heat came across authentically, tragically. There was *The General* with Buster Keaton. No war film ever made has shown so perfectly the absurdity and yet the truth of war as the battle scene at the finish of that film. When people shout and wave flags and men rush into uniform they are preparing themselves for a conflict that reduced to its logical conclusions is as aimless and as foolish as the men that dropped at their guns like ninepins, one after the other. And battles too often are decided by some twist of an event just as grotesque as the sword blade dropping on the rival leader. There was truth too in the scenes of the pursuit, the tossing of the wood over instead of into, the carrier. And the scenes in the forest where they stumble over creepers and into a bear were only a physical representation of the mental happenings of most heroics ; brave, uncomfortable, necessary perhaps, always a little ridiculous. Then I must register personal opinion. I have never been moved to either tears or laughter by any of Chaplin's films. They strike me as being built up on an essential falsity ; that they represent what people think certain types *ought* to feel rather than what they *do* feel. Artificiality



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is most out of place in a comic and Chaplin's films (whether early or late in date) give the impression of heavily built up pantomime ; effects are repeated over and over because last year they got a laugh, until by a process of mob-hypnotism people scream at a pantomime or laugh at Chaplin because before seeing either they have worked themselves up into a state when not to smile is to invoke sense of personal disaster. It is so much the theatre in its worst sense and as I have written previously, I feel the concern of the cinema is with actual life.

On the other hand, Syd Chaplin at his most slapstick moments, does seem to have an individual and tragic quality that because of its restraint (almost repression) reaches a high point of art. Clara Bow is excellent, when allowed to be herself. Unhappily she is usually spoiled half way through the film by having to pretend to be what she emphatically is not. Dorothy Arzner should direct her. A film that brought across only her "tough" amoral liveliness and cut out the beaded dresses and the sentiment would be a joy to watch.

Then there was the larger version of *Greed*. Von Stroheim being Austrian it may be objected that this is not an American picture but the train, the love scenes on the long sewer, the curious lack of beauty in so many small towns merely, it seems, through defect of planning, the arid terrifying quality of the landscape got by one shot of the strange lizards peculiar to the American desert, shows one side of the West as no other picture has shown it. And the noise and jangle of that beach town was perfect. For succeed or get out seems stamp-

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ed everywhere in a new community with less place even than in Europe for misfits or failures. And it is easy in the West really to get lost. Probably the space upon space of hills make for the excessive community atmosphere of the Pacific Coast. Agoraphobia drives people together until the young Westerner is genuinely unhappy unless he is with a crowd. And cannot understand that Easterner or European may not share his feelings.

For to appreciate or judge American movies it is necessary to understand something of American psychology and geography. For there exists a conflict in the States between West and East, between the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts, as acute as that between any of the Border races of Europe. Naturally this does not exist for the very intelligent but it is clearly apparent to the bulk of the population. And Western and Eastern Americans have an utterly different type of mentality.

The average Easterner approximates to Europe, talks a far better English than can usually be heard in London, and suffers to the point of sterility from over-education. The Westerner is child-like, impressionable, superficial to an alarming degree and vigorous. He gets things done but is apt to believe the most amazing stories. And Europe, after all, is a good fortnight's trip or more, travelling night and day, from Hollywood.

Movies are made by the Western American (who controls Hollywood and therefore the bulk of production) with a prejudice in favor of his own ideas but with an eye to an exten-

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sive Eastern market. Whenever possible therefore virtue and triumph are going to be assigned to the West. Aren't you tired of the spoilt Eastern girl who is saved from her own individuality and made into the community standard pattern by the Western hero from the out of doors ? One kiss, one sentence, is cheerfully allowed to wipe out a character built up by twenty years of a totally different environment. This is false to psychological truth but not so different from actual superficial happening as it might seem. There must be no questioning in certain parts of America of certain American institutions. The newly arrived European will be invited to forego his modes of thought, dressing, eating, sleeping and accept without protest and with enthusiasm the community convention of those about him. He must talk, he must smile, he must, at all costs, always be cheerful. If he does not, he will be taken for a snob or a communist (no great distinction is made) and he will have to suffer accordingly. So it is not so much that American films are false (they are often painfully real) as that they are true to a mob-psychology that is unpleasing to contemplate to those outside it. But is England free of the same charge ? The public school formula is as narrow and as destructive as any small town American classification. The Headmaster of one of the best known public schools in England stated recently in print in the leading educational journal that the *intelligent* boy should be encouraged rather to remain in the secondary school as there were certain types that could not be successfully dealt with in public school education. Nobody as far as I am aware made



any comment upon this extraordinary statement. Even though the Headmaster went on to proclaim the training in leadership his school gave to boys. But if *intelligent* boys are to be encouraged to remain out of it (we quite agree they should be) what kind of leaders, even what kind of men, are being thrown out to face the complexities of modern civilization? Much the same types probably as emerge from a small Middle West town, trained not to seek for psychological truth but to regard their own *convention* as omnipotent and despising all those who do not fall into, or agree with it.

So it is not that American movies are false to outward life but rather that the English have so trained themselves to see only with the eyes of their own convention that they reject as false what is but the obverse of their own existence. Perhaps too they realise the falseness of this arid "think as your school (or community) thinks" attitude, once it is shown to them in a different set of clothes. Only the criticism should be this is a wrong convention, destructive to life, not this is a wrong convention because it is American. And there should be discrimination between the spectacular historical film which is almost sure to be wrong and the less pretentious movies that are so good a picture at least of the geographical features of the States.

I am writing of the cinema and not of literature but as few can afford a trip to the States and as it is important from all points of view to have some knowledge of the important differences which exist in the American temperament, it might repay the student of American movies to read the following

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books (all published and easily obtainable in England) *The Time of Man*, by Elizabeth Roberts, *Palimpsest* by H. D. and *Manhattan Transfer*, by Dos Passos. They would then be far on the road to understanding something of the differing cultures and geographical conditions which build up American life and some aspects of which are faithfully reflected in the mass of American movies.

BRYHER.

## DES TRUQUAGES

Le génial cinéaste Jean Epstein a dit : « Avec le cinéma les hommes virent pour la première fois avec un œil qui n'était pas le leur », ce qui signifie que le cinéma en tant que technique nous *permet* de faire un bond hors de *notre représentation de l'Univers*, de « changer de coordonnées ». Avec le cinéma nous pouvons faire d'un mètre un kilomètre ou un millimètre en changeant de longueur de foyer, mais nous pouvons surtout — et cela est spécifique — comprimer ou allonger le temps. Enfant, je m'imaginais aux confins de l'Univers une cloison noire. Son existence ne faisait pas de doute pour moi. J'ignorais à son sujet le Pourquoi ? du clown Grock et le Parce que de Einstein. Je me la dépeignais telle une étoffe tendue. Nulle

part d'interstices, mais on pouvait peut-être passer les mains dans des espèces de manches et tâter à l'aveuglette ce qu'il y avait par *derrière*, au delà de notre Univers. (Depuis lors, la Relativité m'a appris que par derrière, il y a... encore nous et qu'un rayon lumineux partant en ligne droite dans l'Univers revient à son point de départ du côté opposé.) Mais j'ai retrouvé *au cinéma* mes cloisons noires, tangibles. Et les manches sont devenues lucarnes. Et sur l'écran je puis dans certains essais d'avant-garde observer de notre Univers à cinq sens notre Univers *changé de coordonnées*.

Dans ce monde de l'harmonie cinégraphique, intuitive chez certains, raisonnée chez d'autres, il faut faire, techniquement parlant, une distinction entre les moyens d'investigation ou « d'expression » tels que angles de vue, surimpressions, accélérés et ralentis d'une part et les truquages proprement dit, d'autre part. C'est de ces derniers que je veux vous parler ici.

On peut, ce me semble, diviser les truquages en trois catégories : les truquages photochimiques, photomécaniques et mécaniques.

Je classerais par exemple dans les truquages photochimiques l'obtention d'effets de nuit en plein jour avec de la pellicule panchromatique et un écran rouge. On en trouve dans le documentaire en tous points remarquable de Moreau : « Visions de New-York », qui passe présentement dans les salles parisiennes.

Dans la deuxième catégorie entrent les truquages obtenus par combinaison de deux ou plusieurs négatifs distincts.



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Enfin j'appelle truquages mécaniques ceux reposant sur une illusion d'optique indépendante de la pellicule et enregistrée directement par l'appareil de prise de vues.

D'une façon générale, ce qui caractérise les truquages cinématographiques, c'est leur extrême simplicité, leur naïveté, pourrait-on dire. Aussi allons-nous chercher dans cet article à donner à nos lecteurs — ou à ceux qui ne l'auraient pas encore — ce sens de la déduction, ce bon sens technique, qui permet mieux que mille « recettes » de trouver *un* moyen *possible* de réaliser tel ou tel truquage vu dans un film, sans que ce soit forcément celui qui a été réellement employé par le réalisateur. Car il y a en général plusieurs moyens *possibles* de réaliser un truquage quelconque et seuls les essais de dernière heure en laboratoire permettent de trouver le plus satisfaisant pratiquement.

La première catégorie de truquage reposant essentiellement sur une étude approfondie de la sensibilité des diverses émulsions et avant tout de la panchro pour des couleurs, elle ne nous a fourni jusqu'à présent que presque pas d'exemple, car cette virtuosité photochimique nécessaire n'est en général pas le fort des réalisateurs, gens plus ou moins d'imagination mais fort peu de science. D'autre part les techniciens du cinéma n'ont jamais jusqu'à présent fait preuve d'imagination artistique créatrice. Les ressources de cette catégorie de truquage sont cependant immenses.

La seconde catégorie n'est pas très riche non plus en exemples, car ces truquages photomécaniques sont d'une réalisation assez difficile et avant tout parlent peu, de même que les

premiers, à la « visualité » des metteurs en scène. Dans un des derniers films de Lubitsch le doux Monte Blue en tête à tête avec son irascible femme, se voit dire par celle-ci : « Je t'écraserai entre le pouce et l'index ! » La scène se passe dans une pièce quelconque ; au fond une porte. La femme, de profil, fait le geste du pouce et de l'index. Et voilà que son mari, debout devant elle, diminue, diminue et ayant atteint une vingtaine de centimètres de hauteur fuit à toutes jambes vers la porte. Voici *un* moyen de réaliser ce truquage : On tourne normalement la scène de la dispute. Au moment du geste fatidique, on arrête de tourner et la femme se fige dans son attitude. L'homme sort du décor, et l'on continue la scène : la femme suit la diminution de son partenaire imaginaire, puis sa fuite vers la porte. On place ensuite l'homme dans la même position de départ dans un champ « absolument » noir c'est à dire dont le parquet et les murs sont tendus de velours noir. L'homme est violemment éclairé, plus que dans la scène primitive. Par un rapide traveling-camera arrière on le fait diminuer en perspective de hauteur sans que rien ne décèle le traveling-camera. Lorsqu'on s'est suffisamment reculé (en « tournant »), l'homme fuit à toutes jambes vers le fond du champ, dont les proportions sont exactement égales à celles du décor primitif. On développe normalement ce second négatif et on en tire un contre-type *extrêmement contrasté*, représentant donc une pellicule blanche avec une silhouette absolument et presque uniformément noire. Ce contre-type va nous servir de *cache* au tirage, grâce auquel nous éviterons l'impression de surimpression, c'est à dire d'un personnage transparent.

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Nous tirerons en effet le négatif n° 1 (en lumière parallèle, pour éviter un parallaxe qui donnerait une copie floue) en intercalant à partir du geste fatidique notre contre-type-silhouette entre le négatif et la pellicule vierge. Si nous développons maintenant notre positif, nous aurons la scène voulue, mais avec une silhouette absolument blanche de l'homme diminuant à partir du geste de la femme. Nous allons donc avant de développer refaire passer notre pellicule vierge dans la machine à tirer en lumière parallèle, à partir du repère désignant le début du truquage, mais cette fois avec notre négatif n° 2 et en intercalant un contre-cache, c'est à dire un positif du contre-type-silhouette. Et nous aurons ainsi après développement notre homme en chair et en os devenant tout petit après la dispute et fuyant vers la porte. Seul pour un œil exercé l'éclairage de l'homme différera un peu de celui du décor et de la femme en particulier, à partir du moment où l'homme diminue de grandeur.

Enfin la troisième catégorie, celle des truquages mécaniques est la plus richement exploitée, car la plus... simpliste.

D'abord la famille des caches et dérivés. Est-il besoin de mentionner *Les frères Schellenberg* joués tous deux par Conrad Veidt ou *Le fils de Zorro*, où le père et le fils, tous deux joués par Fairbanks, se rencontrent sur l'écran. Dans ces scènes, lorsqu'un des personnages est de dos, c'est un « double » qui joue le rôle et la scène est prise normalement, sans cache. Lorsqu'ils sont tous deux de face vous ne les voyez jamais passer l'un devant l'autre car l'acteur unique a joué tout d'abord dans une moitié du décor, la partie de la pellicule correspondant à l'au-



tre moitié étant cachée par une petite plaque de métal insérée dans la « fenêtre » de l'appareil et appelée « cache ». Puis on obture l'objectif et l'on remonte le pellicule en tournant la manivelle en sens inverse du même nombre de tours qu'a duré la scène. On met un contre-cache dans la fenêtre, découvrant la partie cachée et cachant la partie qui était découverte, puis l'acteur passant dans la partie correspondante du champ y joue son second rôle. — Il y a également emploi d'un cache, du reste assez mal réussi, dans *Les trois Lumières*, lorsque le magicien chinois marche dans un désert (qui n'offre pas de repères sur la grandeur absolue) à côté d'un cheval vivant qui lui arrive au-dessous du genou. — De même dans *Jazz* lorsque le héros parle longuement à une dactylo dans son rêve et que celle-ci apparaît et disparaît subitement devant sa machine maintes fois au cour de la conversation. On aurait pu tourner sans cache le héros se figeant dans son attitude lorsqu'on cesse de tourner pour que la dactylo s'en aille du « champ » puis continuant sa péroration devant la chaise vide pour se refiger lorsqu'on replace la dactylo, etc., mais cela aurait forcément occasionné des « sautes » dans le jeu de l'acteur. Au lieu de cela on filme son jeu avec un cache masquant la place de la dactylo. On remonte la pellicule, enlève le cache (qui cette fois avait une forme épousant le plus possible l'emplacement de la dactylo, puisque l'acteur se penchait sur elle), on met le contre-cache et on filme la dactylo seule que l'on fait disparaître et réapparaître en s'arrêtant de tourner chaque fois. — Dans *Entr'acte* nous voyons encore une nouvelle utilisation du cache dans l'image où nous avançons sur une route

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dont les deux bords et les arbres s'incurvent l'un vers l'autre. Pour ce faire on prit d'abord sur une moitié de la pellicule un bord de la route, l'appareil avançant sur une auto au milieu de la route et dans le sens de celle-ci, mais incliné d'un certain angle autour de l'axe optique, on remonta ensuite la pellicule, puis on enregistra le bord opposé de la route après avoir incliné l'appareil symétriquement à sa première position. — Ici il me faut signaler un procédé allemand récent, dont le principe repose sur les caches et contre-caches, mais dont les possibilités d'emploi sont beaucoup plus vastes. C'est le procédé combinatoire Schüfftan. On interpose entre l'appareil de prise de vues et la scène à photographier un miroir vertical incliné à 45° sur l'axe optique : on reçoit ainsi dans l'objectif un « champ » latéral par rapport à l'appareil. Si maintenant on enlève le tain du miroir, une portion correspondante de champ de *devant* l'appareil se projette également sur la pellicule. Bel avantage, direz-vous, que d'avoir à construire deux décors, un latéral et un frontal, au lieu d'un seul et de les combiner optiquement entre eux. Mais c'est que le décor latéral va pouvoir être une *maquette*, très rapprochée et le décor frontal un détail de cette maquette, réalisé en grandeur naturelle et convenablement éloigné pour se raccorder avec l'image de la maquette dans le miroir. Prenons un exemple dans *Metropolis*, où le procédé Schüfftan fut largement mis à contribution. Dans les ensembles de la scène d'inondation qui se passe dans une des cours ouvrières souterraines entourée de gigantesques maisons de douze étages on a construit comme décor frontal la cour, en son milieu le fameux gong et à l'entour les rez-de-

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chaussée des maisons, puis on enleva la partie correspondante du tain du miroir, c'est à dire une bande haute du quart de l'image environ, et l'on fit refléter dans les trois quarts supérieurs une petite maquette représentant les façades des maisons à partir du premier étage. On évita ainsi des décors de 30 ou 40 mètres de hauteur dont la construction et l'éclairage eurent été fort dispendieux. Comme on voit, ce procédé n'est somme toute qu'un système de cache et contre-cache simultanés. Si maintenant, au lieu d'une maquette on met un petit écran sur lequel on projette (avec une source lumineuse *très* intense il est vrai) un bout de film représentant par exemple un monument historique disparu, même avec des foules humaines, on peut avec ce procédé faire évoluer des acteurs dans ce décor.

S. SILKA.

*(Continuation next month.)*

## A NOTE ON HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

(Here the problem of the film theatre is discussed. It raises points that have probably occurred to all film goers. The solutions suggested have of course been applied in many of the larger and more up to date cinemas in England and abroad but the suggestion that the audience should enter from the front, that is, from somewhere beside the screen instead of from behind might prove anything but a remedy. Suggestions on this point are invited. [Ed.]



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Of the two lions upon the path of those using the film as an art-form, the expense of production and the certainty of mutilation, one has been tethered. Screen plays are being made that both by reason of their subjects and the spirit in which they are handled may be called relatively cheap. Several of these plays have been released, and most film-lovers are under the impression that they have seen certain of them. It now transpires that what has been seen is the remains of the originals after they had been absurdly and pathetically and shamefully mauled by lion number two who is being hauled into the market-place in the hope of some kind of lynching, in the hope that an indignant public will at least make an effort to capture and bind the beast, at least rise up and declare that the mutilation of a film is on a level with the mutilation of a picture or a statue and must cease.

Suppose it does. Suppose that in the fairly near future the film as it stands, to be taken or left, is regarded as the sacred property of its maker. Is the way then clear? Is there not a third lion waiting just round the corner and so far unperceived because we have been thinking of the film-play in terms of the stage-play? Where are these hopeful films to be housed? How are they to gather profitably together the enormous public that we know is ready and waiting for them. For it is not waiting in a theatre. It is waiting for the most part in buildings only half of whose seating capacity offers an acceptable view of the performance. And while for a good stage-play the theatre-loving public will sit or stand in any part of the house, for a film they will take only those seats from which it is pos-

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sible to see. And in most cinemas such seats come to an end about half-way down the hall. Can the new producer concentrating his attention on his business of turning out a good film afford to ignore the front rows? Big Business will never consent to ignore them or any part of the economic problem of film production that is so fundamentally different from that of the producer of plays whose house consists of several parts related to each other as good better and best. The film-producer's house is sharply divided into two or at most three parts, related to each other as good, fairly good, and impossible. And thus it is that to date the economically sound films are films capable of attracting together with those who pay for good seats, those also who will pay for a view that relatively is no view at all.

And to admit that good films if they are to pay their way must either be subsidized or housed in halls all of whose seats are good seats is not to admit that the front rows cannot assimilate good films, will not pay for bad views of good films as they pay for their bad views of the average film to date. They can and will. There are good films whose appeal is universal and safely collects those who customarily sit in front. But it is probable that the average good new film will tend for some time to come to select its company from the habitual back rowers. Which is to say that good films, if for no other than economic reasons, need houses all of whose seats are decent seats.

Everything seems to point directly to the many-tiered semi-circular auditorium, a disposition of the audience which for reasons already noted elsewhere is vastly inferior to the rectan-

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gular disposition of the early, garage-shaped cinemas. The alternative is lateral extension. A good side view is after all a view, and anything is better than being an inch too near. In either case if the forward space is counted out, and in time in all decently run cinemas it most surely will be counted out, the utmost possible lateral extension becomes an economic necessity. And it is only owing to unreflecting conformity with theatrical tradition that the majority of our cinemas fail to exploit the possibilities of lateral extension. The majority of our cinemas are necessarily oblong, in shape. Wide frontages, except for very big business are hard to come by and expensive in the upkeep. But it is the unimaginative handling of these oblongs, relatively so easy to build or acquire, that, in placing the screen after the manner of a stage upon the narrower, end wall opposite the entrance instead of upon either of the longer, side walls, has secured so high a percentage of bad seats and sacrificed so many good ones. The extremest side views from the middle and back rows of the average cinema are excellent and an extension of these rows would yield places with views vastly better than those to be had from any part of the front rows.

There is a further possibility applying to every type of cinema and whose neglect is directly due to thoughtless imitation of play-house procedure. The theatre has its main entrance and houses its general paraphernalia in the less valuable part of the house, the part furthest from the stage. In the cinema, though the relative values of the parts are exactly reversed the disposition of the etceteras is not. They face the screen in-



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stead of being behind it or at its sides. Why should not the screen be immediately inside the main entrance, either backing or set sideways to it, and its attendant staff of torch-bearers and other indispensables facing the house instead of occupying space that should be a solid mass of good seats? The only space needed by the management in that portion now so lavishly and lamentably squandered is accommodation for the operator and his fire-extinguishers. No one leaving a cinema in the midst of a play and pausing behind the end barrier for a last glimpse can have failed to notice the excellence of his view. Views almost equally excellent are to be had behind the side back-rows where at present torch-bearers and attendants hang about and chat. The greater part of that hindmost region of barriers, curtains, draughts, arrivals and departures, that should be the ultimate, undisturbed wall-backed paradise of the film-lover, is sheer waste land.

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON.

## WHILE "TURNING" IN AFRICA

When I landed on the ground of Spanish-Morocco, where I worked, under the management of James Bauer, for the Emelka-film : *When the Swallows Homeward Fly* which occupied us four weeks in the deserts of the foreign Legion, it seemed

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that the African conditions of life were not so different from those of Europe. We enjoyed there, also, hotels, cars, electric light and agreeable temperature. One thing only provoked suspicion, namely that in the first-class hotel of the town, "running" hot and cold water did not *run* at all, but had to be poured with a pot into the basin, and that this water, after use in spite of its pretentious gurgling) did not run away, as supposedly it ought, but simply fell into the bucket that stood underneath.

Painful enough too was, during the night, the presence of undesirable visitors in my bed, making frantic revels on my breast and arms.

Slowly but steadily it became evident that we were really in Africa, and what is more, in a territory only just benefiting from civilisation since 15 years ago.

Books always dilated on the heat one has to suffer here. Instead of that we had continual storms and rain fell all day long. Sea-navigation in the Strait of Gibraltar had to be stopped on this account. We began to feel so lonely and cut off from the world ! Food and climate began also to have an unfavourable effect on stomachs. As to the mind, it sank into an empty daze. What the appearance of an 8 day old *Berliner Tagblatt* meant to us you hardly conceive !

Some of us played cards until the cards literally refused service. One of us, decidedly annoyed, walked to and fro in the reading-room. After an hour or more of this exercise, another, seemingly afraid, exhibited his browning which he placed on the table before him. We could never be too cautious!

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A third ran away every day, no matter whether fine or stormy, at the same hour regularly, to the Arabs' quarter and there he used to stop before a painter's shop, with bewildered eyes. The brown proprietor inside, became nervous, and finally, after a week, shut his shop, and his eyes too (for ever !)

God be praised ! Weather improved and the young man with bewildered looks had not to hang himself. He happily recovered lucidity of mind and could play his part successfully.

GUSTAV FRÖHLICH.

## COMMENT AND REVIEW

Now that Paul Czinner is making another film with Elizabeth Bergner ,in which she masquerades in male attire, it would seem the right moment to recall that other film *The Violinist Of Florence*, wherein again, during the latter half of the film she wears the clothes of an Italian peasant boy from the hills. For although this was, and still remains, an outstanding and highly lyrical production, it is not nearly so widely known as it should be, and might well, with the coming of *Don Gil Of The Green Trousers* (from the Spanish of Tirso de Molina) be brought to the notice of the public again, and to



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the notice of the many who have not heard of it ; and at last enjoy a deserved popularity and admiration. Not that it has not already been popular and widely admired. But for a work of such singular distinction and poetic grace, its significance among the few great films and pioneer films to-date does seem to have been rather overlooked.

The title, of course, is against it ; suggesting, as it does, a rather cheaply sentimental romance of love and poverty (somehow the word violin is fatal, being almost synonymous to the initiated with orphan) but a joyous surprise awaits those who go prepared for the worst.

*The Violinist Of Florence* was made for Ufa, and, like *Nju* has Conrad Veidt in the cast. What a delightful film it is, and what a brilliant combination is that of Paul Czinner and Elizabeth Bergner ! How well they respond to each other, and what amazing subtleties they manage to convey ! Here Elizabeth Bergner, small, slender, hair cut in a kind of short archangelic mane,—a child—is something utterly different from the Bergner of *Nju*. She is not a child even, she is some sort of little elfin half-creature, wide eyes, full of covert intention, watching everything.

The film begins, and here apparently is a fairly normal family scene. Evening sunlight, a dinner table, and a child in simple school dress and archangelic mane fussing about with a vase of blossom, almond blossom, or fruit blossom. Standing back to look at it, diving forward to make readjustments. "My flowers are prettier," she says to (can this young woman be) her mother, who wants to know why she

## CLOSE UP

has changed the table decoration. Into an atmosphere of faint hostility steps Veidt, hair slightly grey at the temples. Obviously the flowers are for him. They are seated at dinner. Conrad Veidt opposite the young woman, Elizabeth Bergner between them at the side. Family atmosphere, yet family atmosphere with an atmosphere, so to speak. Not quite the family-at-dinner, apathetic every-day mood. Father certainly, daughter certainly, wife certainly. Something is frigid and hostile. Something between the child, Renee, and the young woman, glossed over by good breeding, but unmistakably there.

What is Renee doing with her blossoms, poking quietly at the vase, pushing it a little toward her father? Soliciting his appreciation perhaps? Beautiful camera positions explain the situation. The blossoms are slowly being poked between the father, and (it must be) the step mother. Renee is eating her food with the wide eyed awareness of a young deer. Nothing is lost on her. She is fighting some situation; her elklike glances are full of concealed determination.

A father-complex evidently and obviously. A tragedy of adolescence, the slow restatement of values and increasing loneliness. The father's hand has carelessly dumped the flowers back to the side of the table, so that he can admire his wife. Renee sees so carefully nothing. Presently the vase begins to jerk across the table again. Dinner goes on. One final jerk (how clever and piquant it was) has obstructed the view again between husband and wife. This time the flowers are exasperatedly dumped on a side table.

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Now Renee is smuggling morsels of food to her terrier under the table. In this obvious disobedience she clearly takes pleasure ; it is a gesture that expresses a whole attitude. Her will against theirs. The step-mother's lap dog and her terrier fight. Dinner breaks up in disorder. The father, trying to separate the two animals is bitten in the hand.

Renee goes to her room, after a series of altercations with her step-mother ; where she wanders about idly and a little restless. She sees her step mother in the garden below, sitting in the evening sunlight. Standing at the window she pulls out her diary.

This diary, natural enough to a schoolgirl, is one of the points one criticises in the film. There was altogether too much of it. Sometimes it explained the action, and was an obvious improvement on the more usual and tiresome series of elaborate superimposed images, but sometimes it arrested the action unduly, and made for impatience.

However now, we are shown, through her writing, the retrospect of her life. It seems her father showered love and attention upon her. Then suddenly he married again and neglected her. It was clever, the suggestion of weakness and cruelty. Veidt is nowhere so good as in his Czinner roles, and nowhere so tiresome as in his Brothers Schellenbergish dual roles.

Seeing, from her window, her father join her step-mother below, and sit beside her, holding her hand, she pulls the curtains, turns on the light and prepares for bed. Presently Veidt comes in. Her joy soon chills when she learns he has



## CLOSE UP

come to altercation with her about her rudeness to her step mother. But finally he extracts a promise from her that she will try to be friends, and leaves her cheered up with a promise to take her to Florence if she is good. Her efforts to please are revealed in the following sequence, where she is seen tasting a mixed drink with her step mother, and helping to improve the flavour. Here the two women are seen in a somewhat hysterical reaction from their hatred. Their sudden enthusiastic acceptance of each other means clearly only a graver danger. Left to themselves they might grow to friendship, but it is evident this attitude cannot be maintained against so poignant a rivalry.

Then follows one of the greatest moments of the film, great in conception of psychology and subtlety and great in achievement of the effect intended. Veidt enters. Both the women are gay with the drink they have mixed. They run up to him each with a glass, and each offers him drink. His method of dealing with the so obviously delicate situation gave the clue completely to his type. Instead of taking both glasses and drinking from each, he almost ostentatiously pushes back Renee's glass and takes that of his wife. Renee holds hers a moment, looking speechless at the subtlety of the betrayal, and the lack of recognition of her efforts, then dashes the glass against her step-mother's legs. There is a petrified moment, then the step mother hurries away, Veidt following. Renee rushes after them and throws herself at her step-mother's feet. It was extraordinary how one was made to feel here that it was not her step-mother's forgiveness she cared

## *CLOSE UP*

for, or whether her step-mother was leaving or not, but that the gesture was entirely toward her father. No notice is taken of her plea except that her father hands her a paper which tells her she is to be sent to boarding school.

The story goes on, showing her life there, with consummate psychology and truth. Finally a letter comes to her from her father. It tells her that he has decided it better for all that she does not come home for the vacation. She walks round in circles and zigzags between two tall trees on a sloping lawn. Collapses finally in a little moaning heap on the ground. What is this leading to, one asks. What a study this of the tragic things that happen in the lives of only the young, when there are no defences ready, and no cynicism against such careless brutality. As she totters backward and forward between the trees one is made to feel that the psychic wound will never leave her, will create phobias for the rest of her life. Is this story going to work itself out as some monumental plea against those things it is impossible to explain to people in words ?

Renee runs away. She gets on a train, sits wedged between slumbering, swart peasants. At the frontier, not having a passport, she is made to leave the train. They go through her belongings, and smilingly tell her she can go on when she obtains her passport. Now comes the second great moment of the film ; — her attempts to cross the frontier. She tries first to go over the bridge. She gets past the first guards. It is a long bridge, and she struts jauntily. But they will not let her pass at the other end. She argues, they regret deeply.

But she has to come back again. She stops in the middle of the bridge, completely disconsolate.

The leisurely treatment of these scenes, the value given to detail, the steady, sure unwinding of her moods and impulses cannot be praised enough. The attempted crossing of that frontier bridge, with typical frontier scenery and types remains a perfect cameo of lyric realism. She hangs about until night, exploring the town, then finds notice of her disappearance and a reward pasted all over a hoarding. Running away toward the river, a voice, cleverly suggested as coming almost from another world says "I am the person you seek?" A ragged boy steps forward, one of those peasant boys who cross the frontier many times daily at their duties, on a donkey. "What do you wish me to take across?" he asks. "Me," answers Renee. Money ends his demurring. He contrives to send her across on his donkey and in his clothes. The ruse succeeds. Renee abandons the donkey and takes to the roads. Her wandering alone in Northern Italy, among hills, and sometimes among herds of cattle, sitting at the roadside, idling, had the essence of poetry. Here again leisurely action, minute followings out of such tiny incidents as trying to find a comfortable position on the roadside stones to sit on gave magnificent atmosphere; this was like healing, it seemed to say. Her joy in the sun and the empty scenery was healing her from the pain and suppressions of the life she had left.

At this point, or somewhere about this point, most curiously and unexpectedly, realism ended, and poetry of a completely



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lyric, Elizabethan order took its place. She is mistaken for a boy, and taken by an artist and his sister to Florence to be painted. These latter sequences and the treatment of them were beautiful and often inspired, but they were all divorced completely from the beginning, which had been presenting life with almost searing psychology. Here was the pure Elizabethan cross-dressing comedy ; the Elizabethan complications. It might easily have been two films joined later into one.

But, in spite of this inconsistency, it remains a gem among films, and drenched with beauty. What a pity it is that it has not been feted and seen by all ; for, indeed, to see a film like this is to experience that rare satisfaction that only the best can give. *The Violinist Of Florence* is, in fact, a classic among films, and should be known by all if only for its value as a reference. We must hope, therefore, that the release of Czinner's new film in due course will lead to a demand for this other earlier one.



La Commission Scholaire of Zurich has issued a paper of advice to parents of pupils resident in that town. With many of the points nobody could quarrel but we begin to wonder how far these welfare movements have value when we read at the end of the report that parents are advised not to take their children to the cinema.

There are a certain number of films (not alas those that

would be chosen by the average censor) that we would willingly forbid to youth. Those full of sentimentality and those with a psychology that inexperience might think was true and that was really false to everything in life. But great films are no more to be forbidden than great books or a visit to a museum and what of the many excellent documentary or travel films that do so much now to widen childrens' lives ?

It is the traditional attitude of the old to the young, of the established to the new that has come out in this report. The same attitude that wearies a child of French by making it read Racine before it has mastered its verbs or that wearies it with the influence of climate on rainfall before it is aware of the different countries even of Europe. Instead of forbidding the cinema we should insist that wherever possible and as a part of education, the child should see a film each week. An increasing standard of education is going to be demanded for the whole civilized world. As day cannot be expanded the only means to make this possible is to use the cinema more and more widely in education.



## NOTICES

### COLD NIGHT IN MUNICH

My belief in St. Petrus of Wetterdingen after having strongly diminished last summer has again increased these latter days.



*The Violinist of Florence*, Elizabeth Bergner and Walter Rilla. Another Paul Czinner triumph. Conrad Veidt is also in the cast. Czinner, of course, is now engaged on another film with Elizabeth Bergner, as noted elsewhere in this issue.

*Courtesy of UFA*





Conrad Veidt, as the father, reproves Renee for her attitude to her step-mother. Elizabeth Bergner as Renee gives an amazingly sensitive and enchanting characterisation of a romantic, self-willed and lonely schoolgirl.



Renee's father refuses the drink she offers and takes his wife's instead. For particulars of this scene, one of the screen's most subtle presentations of dramatic psychology, see the notice on *The Violinist of Florence* in *Comment and Review*.



Renee gets herself into trouble. This scene explains itself. It also explains.



The presence of her father at the school. Our sympathies are entirely with Renee.



Renee, dressed in the clothes of a hill-boy is taken to Florence to be painted. These latter scenes are the pure Shakespearian cross-dressing comedy brought up to date, and touch a high level of pure poetry. A contradistinction from the realism of the earlier scenes.

*Courtesy of UFA*



## CLOSE UP

He had prepared a scenario, one November night, just the kind of scenario I would wish to my rivals.

As pleasure : frozen legs, temperature to make our flesh creep, and as finale, some important colds.

A magnificent moon tempers the winter storm.

General coughing. Asthmatic noise of the lights, which form a complex structure. Ludwig Reiber has disposed every thing to obtain the best effect.

The film *Secrets of Geneva* is turned.

Scenario is adapted from Peter Oldfield's novel, which has been published in England and Germany. This novel contains many acute observations about the League of Nations.

Here, too, under a flood of light, we may contemplate an assembly of the League of Nations. Delegates of Italy, England, Germany too, Munich, and Schwaling. Interesting faces !

This assembly doesn't speak so much as that of Geneva, but works more, it seems. Perhaps is it an effect of the cold ? Why do they not hold assemblies of the League of Nations in the open air, on a sweet November night, when the wind blows all around ?

All the faces are red, look consequently much younger. Ideal models of publicity for Lukutate !

Christa Tordy (the doctress who studied a half-year in Munich) and Carmen Cartellieri must often apply to the hair-dresser for cosmetics as their noses can't endure the warmth of the lamps.

But Franz Seitz seems to be at ease. He is art director

## CLOSE UP

of the film (manager Willy Reiber). He orders and thunders as if he were at the head of four army-corps.

Alfred Abel and Ernst Reicher keep up their spirits (and the others also) by fencing together during the pauses.

But a new scene begins. Ernest Reicher appears as an international chief of police. The Swiss gendarmes come in. Suspected persons are interrogated. Atmosphere becomes nervous and vibrating. One of the cast takes fire —and we have no Minimax at our service !

Alfred Abel plays a double part, that is why he is entitled to have two cognacs also. I have mine prepared with warm milk. Abel seeing that declares that it's the sole way he can drink milk, to which I reply, to be sure, that it is my only mode of drinking cognac.

So you see, there are difference of taste even in a cold night in Munich.

As the title of the film contains the word "secrets", it would be impolite to give any explanation of its content.

But what I am free to declare is that everyone of us is exceedingly satisfied with the general conditions in which the film has been turned, and all parts have been played very well.

It's by no means commonly the case, you know !

(*Secrets of Geneva*, an Emelka Film.)

## CLOSE UP

### POINTS FROM LETTERS

#### *Some Comments by Dr. Havelock Ellis.*

(Note. *False Shame*, the film referred to in this letter, is an UFA production, directed against the evils and dangers of venereal disease, and freely shown in nearly all countries.)

I am much interested in your account of the *False Shame* film (which I have never heard of). Before I reached your comments on the film I had already made about exactly the same comments myself. So I have little to add. (The comment was that excellent as such a film is in intention, too much care cannot be expended on the method of presentation, and that the cases shown of venereal disease in its advanced forms should not be allowed to be the impression received of the immediate results of infection. It is true that it was explained that such cases as were shown were the result of neglect, nevertheless the effect was frightening and quelling, and apt to be destructive to the sex impulse of the young rather than helpful) I fear such a film would prejudice the ordinary English mind against *anything* of the sort. But of course it is quite possible, and on the film even easy, to *suggest* all that is necessary without presenting horrors which can only have an evil influence on virginal minds. There are now Health Weeks from time to time in English towns. There happened to be one on at Ipswich when I went there for a few days last month. I went to one lecture on Sunlight, nakedness, etc. with film, all very good indeed.

I liked the December *Close Up*, and I hope it will go on hammering at the same points. What I require, in the case of a new art like the cinema, with so many untried possibilities, is a show place *not* for the general public but for producers, critics, teachers, and others seriously interested in the possibilities of this art, where *anything* can be shown, however outrageous, however complete in its failure—for at worst it will be valuable as a warning. It is only by experimentation and discussion in this way that progress is possible. In the early days of the Elizabethan drama they did this in public; it was possible to do it so, and it was no matter whether the public was present or not (evidently they were often not present, for so many plays rapidly disappeared for ever) but as we cannot do it in public it seems absolutely necessary to do it in private.



## CLOSE UP

*From Miss Marion Fitz-Simonds.*

A certain correspondent seems to have been enjoying himself hugely at the expense of "cannibalistic tom-tom beaters", and presumably editors and all who are foolish and cannibalistic enough to "rush about and dogmatise" and "apply their half baked theories to the comparatively new Films". So I trust we may be pardoned if we permit ourselves to enjoy ourselves too at the expense of said correspondent, who first of all snubs us for dogmatising, then gets his shoulders down to dogmatism with the unwieldy heaviness of a tank.

This witty man, transported in a perfect frenzy of sarcasm, tells us we have to wait 10,000 years before a super-producer is born. The greatest film, we are told, will be made by a director "combining the geniuses of. . . Mozart, Rembrandt and Tchekov". Imagine anything more dreary, stale and unapplied to modern existence, or the existence we can logically hope concerns the future! At least remains the comfort that the monster won't emerge for centuries to come.

I'm sorry to be fierce. And one doesn't have to love the films, I know. But to fail to see their potentialities is surely a confession of failure that renders unsound deductions and too-glib pigeon-holing a mere wasp in the jamjar.

## FILMS RECOMMENDED BY CLOSE UP

### FIRST CHOICE

*Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney (The Love of Jeanne Ney).*

Ufa. Direction: G. W. Pabst. Manuscript: Leonhardt. Cameraman: Wagner. Fitz Rasp, Edith Jehanne, Brigitte Helm, Uno Henning, Vladimir Sokoloff in exquisite characteristic Pabst scenario. Superb technique, acting, photography. Set in Crimea and Montparnasse. Should be seen at any cost.

## CLOSE UP

### *Bed and Sofa.*

Studfilm A. G. Ludmila Semenowa, Woldemar Fogel and Nicolei Bataloff in new Russian film. The *Potemkin* method applied to domestic drama. Amazing psychology. Uncompromising treatment.

### *The Mother.*

From the story by Maxim Gorki. Meschrabom-Rus-Production. Directed by W. Pudowkin. The mother : W. Baranowskajas. The father : Lenistjakoff. The son : Nicolei Bataloff.

### *The Black Sunday.*

Production Goskino. Directed by Wiskowski. A second *Potemkin*, continuing the story of the 1905 revolution. If possible more realistic in treatment than *Potemkin*, though perhaps less masterly in appeal.  
(There are further Russian films, of which particulars later.)

### *The Violinist of Florence (Geiger von Florenz.)*

Ufa. Directed by Paul Czinner. Elizabeth Bergner, Conrad Veidt, Walter Rilla. An exquisite film, of which particulars elsewhere.

### *Voyage to the Congo.*

Neofilm production. "Documentaire" by Marc Allegret.

### *Rien que les Heures and En Rade.*

Neofilm productions. Directed by A. Cavalcanti.

## CLOSE UP

### SECOND CHOICE

#### *Kopf Hoch Charley (Bigamie)*

Ufa. Ellen Richter in marvellous role. Directed by Willy Wolff. Last third of picture falls off.

#### *Am Rande der Welt, (The Edge of the World)*

Ufa. Carl Grune directs. Brigitte Helm, Albert Steinrück.

#### *Out of the Mist (Hagar's Sohn)*

Defu production. Mady Christians, Werner Fuetterer, Vladimir Sokoloff in drama of the German mountains.

#### *The Youth of Queen Louise*

Terra film. Max Glass production. Direction; Carl Grune. Mady Christians in title role.

#### *The King of Kings.*

Cecil M. de Mille production. H. B. Warner, Ernest Torrence, Jacqueline Logan, Rudolph and Joseph Schildkraut, William Boyd.

#### *Heimweh (Homesickness)*

Terra Film. Max Glass production. Mady Christians and Wm. Dieterle. Photographs elsewhere in this issue.

(These recommendations are made as a random selection for the benefit of our many readers who write for information as to what films they should see. The list will be amplified next month).



## CLOSE UP

The first film Erich Pommer will make for Ufa this year, of the four under contract, will be *Ketten*, from Leonhard Frank's novel *Karl und Anna*. Hans Szekely is collaborating with the author in preparing the scenario.

The second Pommer production will be directed by Marcel de Sano, a young Roumanian, who has gone to Berlin from Hollywood where he directed his first film.

*Pariser Ehen und Pariserinnen*. The new Swedish-German film of Isepa-Ufa has been renamed *Pariser Ehen*. Directed by Gustav Molander, who, of course is Swedish, and with the Swedish cameramen, Julius Jaenzon and Dahlquist. Sets are by Neppach. In the cast Ruth Weyher, Louis Ierch, Hans Junkerman (whose last part was in *Tolle Lola (Crazie Mazie)*) Margit Manstad. (Swedish) Karin Swanstrom, (Swedish) Miles Manner, (English) and Alexander Mursky, (Russian).

*Natur und Liebe*, the Ufa Kulturfilm has been shown with tremendous success at the Ufa Pavilion in Berlin. It was made by Dr. Ulrich Schulz and ranks with *Kraft und Schönheit* in point of originality and interest.

The first film Terra will make this year is *Hanneless Himmelfahrt (Hannel's Journey to Heaven)* from the story by Gerhart Hauptmann. The same story was filmed by Terra seven years ago. Now every development of modern technique will be used, and it is promised that some of the results will come as a surprise. The name of the director will shortly be announced.

*The Youth of Queen Louise*, the new Terra film, Max Glass production, directed by Carl Grune, is a triumph for Mady Christians who plays the part of the Queen. She is supported by Anita Dorris, Adele Sandrock, Helga Molander. Hedwig Wangel, Charles Vanel, Matthias Wiemann, H. A. V. Schelttow, Theodor Loos, Alfred Gerasch, and a large cast. Cameraman : Arpad Viragh.



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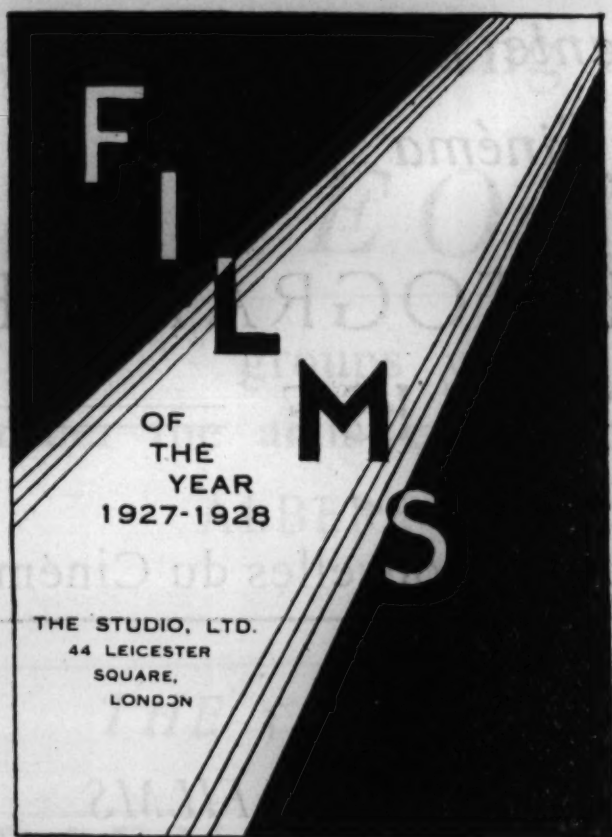
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"Your King and Country Need You, screamed the posters. Well they were learning now what king and country was. "You bloody bastard..." the sergeant began, and the cane descended again, full between a horse's ears. The rest of the sentence was lost in the jingling of the reins. Children in prams sat and watched "the soldiers"... "It's a shame," someone in the crowd yelled... "Not so good for recruiting to do that in the open," an officer was saying.... The recruits galloped along the Row. On hoardings black robed mothers with white hair prodded their sons toward bayonets."

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*It is not joy that waits for you here.*

Then he shook his throat from the upturned collar of his weatherproof and regained pride. There was a club foot of rock and erosions had continued it in a leg. The family stronghold was set on the instep, wary with watchtowers. It was an attempt at shelter from Atlantic gales, seen only obliquely from the sea, but the wind made arcs and tormented it with catcalls. . . . Night set off across the sea like an expedition. Something would happen. Rising, he felt the land shake under impact. Tide crashed against his feet. . . . . " . . . leads to an immense climax :

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